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Frontispiece. "He made my life a misery." Page 77.

The Widowhood of Gabrielle Grant.

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CHAPTER I

FREE!

The afternoon train was drawing up at the station of San Remo. A young lady leaned from the window of a first-class carriage and inquired in French the name of the station. As a porter answered her, she turned quickly to some one within the carriage.

"Here we are, Marcella; this is San Remo. I'll get down, and you can give our things to this man."

The next moment a small, slight form, attired in a neat travelling suit of pale grey, descended lightly from the high vehicle, revealing in her descent a pair of small, shapely feet, daintily shod. A knot of pale violets adorned the front of her coat.

She directed the porter to enter the carriage and waited till he re-appeared laden with various *impedimenta*. Then she advanced with out-

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stretched hand to the assistance of a big, portly woman, some forty years of age, whose pale complexion had a certain duskiness of hue suggestive of mulatto origin.

"Be careful, Marcella; give me that dressing-case. It is a very deep step, and if you missed it——"

"The fall would be great," said Marcella good-naturedly; "but I won't fall, though this strikes me as the most barbarous way of fixing a railway carriage that ever I saw. There, I'm down."

As she spoke her broad mouth widened into a smile which showed a perfect row of large, white teeth. She was evidently relieved to find herself safe upon the platform. With her ample form and homely countenance she presented the most absolute foil to the young lady's graceful person and *mignonne* features. It was clear that a perfect understanding existed between them. They were mistress and maid; but they were more: they were friends.

Gabrielle Grant named the hotel to which she was going and followed the porter as he led the way out of the station. At the door a man in livery approached them, tried in vain to take possession of the dressing-case, to which Marcella desperately clung, and conducted them to the hotel omnibus.

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looked, Gabrielle had been married for nearly ten years.

"I am going to be happy here," Gabrielle said to herself half an hour later, after she had taken possession of a pleasant, spacious room, with a smaller one adjoining it for Marcella's use, and was refreshed by a cup of tea; "happy at least for six weeks or so—afterwards—." Her little mouth closed firmly with a taut, strenuous refusal to consider the afterwards. Gabrielle was not yet thirty; but she had learned the wisdom of taking short views of life.

Surely the place to which she had come seemed a place to be happy in, if anywhere upon this earth fleeting, elusive happiness can be grasped and held. She had stepped on to the balcony outside her window and was looking down on a garden full of tall, graceful palms, magnolias, pepper trees, and eucalyptus. Below the rich foliage were flowers in abundance. She could discern roses, carnations, pansies, geraniums. The air was balmy with the perfume of trees and flowers. To the right stretched other gardens surrounding fine villas or palatial hotels. Beyond houses and gardens lay the broad sea, so clearly, deeply blue with a cloudless sky above, from which already shone the first faint beam of the evening star.

Half-leaning, half-sitting on the balustrade

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of the balcony, she absorbed the soul-satisfying view while Marcella was busy unstrapping trunks and arranging her mistress' belongings.

"He said he might be able to join me before Christmas," Gabrielle said to herself with a little shiver; "but Christmas is a long way off yet. It is still October. I will not think of it."

Yet try as she would to evade it, the thought of her husband returned to her again and again.

"I am glad that I decided to come at once to the Riviera," she reflected, "it would not suit him. He cares nothing for the beauty of Nature, for nought indeed save the 'almighty' dollar. If he were here now he would see only that big hotel, and would amuse himself by calculating how much it costs to run it and what returns it makes. Well, I love money too, I suppose, or I should never—but God knows, it was not for my own sake."

Stung by this thought, she sprang to her feet and began to move to and fro on the balcony. The expression of her face and the little horizontal lines between her delicate brows told of painful reflections. She was thinking of the first time she had come to Europe. How she had longed to visit Italy! How she had dreamed of seeing Rome, Florence, Venice! How different the reality from her dreams, when she had visited

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them in the company of one whose hard, coarse mind and mocking, cynical tongue had rendered every place alike unendurable to her!

"Oh, I am thankful that he does not want to see Italy again!" she said to herself. "I hardly dared to speak lest he should detect my joy when he told me that he meant simply to go across to London and I must join him there."

Altogether, it had seemed the most unlooked for good fortune to Gabrielle Grant when her husband discovered that he had business which called him to the Far West just at the time that the lease of their house in Boston expired. But for the fact that it suited his convenience so well he would hardly have allowed her to start alone for Europe. "I must make the most of it," she thought, "I may never have such a holiday again."

When she stepped into her room, Marcella was shaking out a tea-gown of pale silk shot with pink.

"Will you wear this, madam?" she asked; "the season has not begun, it seems, and there is hardly any one in the hotel."

"So much the better," said Gabrielle; "I did not come here to see people. Yes, that will do nicely, Marcella; it slips on so easily."

When she went down to dinner, it was evident

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that there were few persons in the hotel. Hardly a dozen sat down at the large dining-table. Gabrielle was seated next to a consumptive looking clergyman who talked incessantly, to her utter weariness. He had once spent a few weeks in America, and it pleased him to compare things British and American. She let him talk, assenting now and then for courtesy's sake, while her mind pursued its own train of thought.

"You do everything on a grand scale in America," he remarked after a while, "even your railway accidents; for instance, that awful one the other day."

"What other day?" she asked, "I have not heard of one recently."

"You cannot mean that you do not know to what I refer," he said in surprise. "Why, it was only a day or two ago; in Tuesday's paper we saw it, you know."

"But I have not seen Tuesday's paper," she replied. "I only landed in Genoa from a Boston steamship this morning, and I have not seen a newspaper since I left home."

"Then you know nothing about it," he said, with an air of satisfaction. "It was an awful disaster; happened somewhere among the Rockies. The train was crossing a deep gully, through which runs a river—the Zanzari, I think they call

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it, and the bridge gave way. The whole train was precipitated into the gorge. Some of the carriages stuck on a bank midway; the rest went right into the river and all within them perished in the water."

Gabrielle shuddered.

"It is supposed that nearly two hundred persons were killed," said the clergyman. "You would like to read about it, I daresay. I will find the paper for you."

Gabrielle's face, never high in its colouring, had grown very pale. She raised her hand as if in imagination she pushed the paper from her.

"No, no, thank you," she said, "I cannot bear to read of such things. It makes me miserable. I cannot get them out of my mind. And it is not as if one could do the poor sufferers any good."

"Most of them are beyond any help now," he said.

"But God could have helped," she said, with a thrill of pain in her voice; "oh, how can He suffer such things to be?"

"The ways of Providence are inscrutable to the human understanding," said the clergyman. "Doubtless He ordained it for some wise purpose that is beyond our comprehension."

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Gabrielle heard the glib utterance with a sickening sensation.

"I would rather believe that He could not help it," she said. "I cannot understand a God of love ordaining that awful anguish of sudden death, and the consequent desolation of loving hearts and happy homes, for the sake of some remote good, however great."

"Ah! but God's ways are not as our ways," he replied; "we must trust where we cannot trace."

But Gabrielle had risen and was moving from the table.

She was up in good time the next morning. Her temperament was active, and she had the delight of a child in awaking to a new day in a fresh place. She bade her maid set a little table on the balcony and put her breakfast there. The air was fresh enough to make her enjoy the warm sunshine which fell on her as she sat eating crisp rolls and delicious butter with the zest of perfect health. She was a good sailor, and while poor Marcella had struggled desperately to do her duty only to succumb at last and endure the mortification of being waited upon by the mistress whom it was her one desire to serve, Gabrielle had hardly missed a meal, while her nerves had recovered tone, and both mind and

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body strength, under the influence of the bracing ocean breezes. She was prepared to enjoy to the utmost her rare spell of freedom.

"Make haste, Marcella," she cried, as, her breakfast over, she leaned upon the balustrade drinking in the beauty of the glorious blue sea, the garden with its rich foliage and heavy scented blossoms, and the olive clad hills beyond. "Make haste, for I am impatient to be out. I want to walk by the sea; I want to explore the town; I want to climb that hill. It is so lovely to feel that I can do just as I like."

Her maid did not reply. There was a grave, almost an anxious, look on her face as she came towards her mistress, bearing a missive which had just been delivered into her hand.

"A cablegram, madam," she said, "a cablegram from Boston. It has been forwarded by the agent from Genoa."

The colour faded from Gabrielle's face as she turned to take the envelope. She supposed that the telegram was sent by her husband, and the thought of a message from him could only inspire her with dread.

Slowly opening the envelope, she began to read the lines enclosed. What was it made them so hard to understand? The lines danced before her eyes. She sat down, shading her eyes from

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the sun, her heart throbbing wildly, her limbs trembling, while she strove to grasp the meaning of the strange words.

The sender was not her husband; but Mr. Meredith, an old friend and her solicitor.

"Ere this reaches you, the newspapers will have informed you of the Zanzari River accident," he said. "Unhappily the news respecting Mr. Abel Grant is true. There is no doubt that he is one of those who have perished."

The paper fluttered from Gabrielle's fingers to the ground. As she looked up and met her maid's anxious eyes, a deep flush rose in her face and mounted even to the roots of her hair; then faded as quickly, leaving her face colourless.

"Oh, madam, you have bad news! Tell me," cried Marcella.

Gabrielle made no reply. She rose and walked to and fro on the balcony, her hands clasped tightly before her. In her heart a voice cried to her that she was free—free! But she could not believe that the thing was true.

Suddenly she became aware of Marcella's anxious suspense. She began to speak, but her words seemed broken and strange, even to her own ears.

"News! such news, Marcella," she said; "there has been an accident. You can read the tele-

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gram; but first go downstairs and ask for the latest newspapers and bring them to me."

Her maid disappeared and quickly returned with a bundle of papers. Gabrielle turned them over with trembling hands, and at last found what she sought. Her eye hurriedly scanned the column. She could not read the sickening details. Ah! here was the name for which she looked!

"Mr. Abel Grant, of Boston, is known to have travelled by this train, and there is little doubt that he is amongst the dead, though his body has not yet been discovered."

Gabrielle let fall the paper and sat gazing blankly before her. Her face was stony in its lack of expression. Meanwhile Marcella had rapidly made herself acquainted with what had happened. She threw herself on her knees beside her mistress and clasped and kissed her cold little hands.

"Oh, my dear, dear missy," she said, unconsciously addressing her as she had been wont to do in her childhood, for she had been maid to Gabrielle's mother before she became her own, "don't look like that. You must not indeed. It's a terrible shock, but it is the Lord's will."

Her maid's words broke the spell which held Gabrielle. She broke into a wild laugh, in-

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stantly followed by a burst of passionate tears. She threw her arms about the neck of this faithful friend, leaned against her sturdy frame and sobbed with utter physical abandonment. But when Marcella would have murmured words of comfort, Gabrielle laid her hand upon her lips.

"Don't speak, Marcella," she said, "don't let my tears deceive *you*. I am a wicked woman—a wicked, heartless woman."

"No, no, my dear child, you shall not say it," responded Marcella tenderly. "You have too much heart. That's where the trouble is."

"I am a wicked woman," repeated Gabrielle, "you shall not contradict me, Marcella. What other woman would be *glad* to learn that her husband was dead? It is true. The news startled me; but I was not sorry. I *looked into my inmost heart and I knew that I was glad.* Is not that enough to make me weep—to know that I am such a wretch as that?"

"Hush, hush, my dear," said her guardian tenderly, "you cannot help it. It is not *your* fault. The Lord knows how you have suffered."

"He knows I would be sorry if I could," said Gabrielle.

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CHAPTER II

A HOUSE TO LET

GABRIELLE spent the whole of that day in seclusion. She sat on the balcony through most of its hours gazing across the blue sea with eyes that saw little of the outward, so keen was the inward vision before which rose continually the past scenes of her life. She said little, and after the one wild passionate storm had spent itself, she shed no tears. Marcella watching her anxiously, saw a pathetic beauty in the pose of the small, well-set head, with its wealth of raven-black hair coiled high above her forehead, as it was outlined against the clear sky. Vehement words burned upon the servant's lips; but the quiet, restrained air of her mistress checked their utterance.

Gabrielle was still reproaching herself with her insensibility. She tried to fix her mind on the sudden and terrible fate which had befallen

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sat down, and taking up Gabrielle's Bible, began to read psalm after psalm in a low monotone, till, in spite of herself, Gabrielle's eyelids drooped and she fell into a profound sleep. Yet Marcella remained beside her till the break of day.

The morning dawned gloriously fair. The sea sparkled in the sunshine beneath a sky of cloudless blue. Gabrielle rose about her usual time, and breakfasted upon the balcony. When a little later Marcella suggested that they should go out, Gabrielle willingly agreed. She shrank from observation as she went down the broad staircase and across the hall of the hotel. At the door she encountered the proprietor, who smilingly bade her "good morning." Gabrielle wondered at his smile. She had a curious feeling that every one who saw her must know that she was a newly-made widow, bereft of her husband by a sudden and terrible calamity, yet too heartless to mourn for him. But in the fresh air and sunshine she presently forgot herself. It was so lovely to walk along the shore and listen to the soft ripple of the waves. Her spirits rose like those of a child.

"I like this place, Marcella," she said. "Are not those palms glorious, and did you ever see such flowers so late in the year? Oh, there is a man with violets; I must have some."

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roused herself and wrote a response to the cablegram, which Marcella despatched.

Utterly worn out, Gabrielle at last retired to rest, and soon sank into slumber; but Marcella had hardly lain down in the adjoining room when she was roused by wild cries, and hurried back to her mistress. Gabrielle was sitting up in bed, her face pallid and bedewed with perspiration, her eyes dilated with fear. She was still trembling under the influence of her terrifying dream.

"Oh, Marcella, I saw him —I saw him fall—I heard the thud of his body on the stones—and yet I thought that he was here; that he had hold of me, and was reproaching me—oh, there is no one here, is there?"

"No one but your own Marcella, my darling," said her faithful servant, "and no one shall come near to harm you while I am here. It was nothing but a horrid dream. Let me shake up your pillow and set your bed straight. Then I'll light the spirit lamp and heat some milk for you, and when you've taken that you'll be able to sleep."

But Gabrielle shuddered at the very thought of going back into the world of dreams. Marcella soothed her as if she were a child. Then drawing an easy chair beside the bed, Marcella

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able dwelling for any one who should take it. It was the house of an Italian lady who had gone to Germany for the winter. Any one inclined to take it must apply for information to the English artist in the Via Umberto.

"The English artist?" repeated Gabrielle.

The man bethought himself, and opened the drawer of a table and produced a card, which he handed to her. She looked at it and read:—

"Basil Theyn,
"Via Umberto 18, Piano 4°."

"Ah!" said Gabrielle, "I am glad he is an Englishman; it will be easier for us to come to an understanding. After luncheon, I will call upon him, Marcella."

Her maid looked at her with grave, inquiring eyes, but said nothing. The next moment Gabrielle's eyes fell on a picture which hung above a low bookcase on a line with the door. It represented a group of women washing clothes on the bank of a clear stream. A girl, with beautiful, lithesome figure kneels in the foreground, a little apart from the rest. With one hand she dabbles in search of the soaked linen; the other has just placed a red flower in her hair, and she bends towards the mirror proffered by a still pool on her right, gazing with

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delight at the reflection of her beauty. Gabrielle was no artist, but she could see that the colour and composition of this picture were admirable. The face and form of the girl fascinated her.

"Oh, what an exquisite picture!" she cried. "Do you not like it, Marcella?"

Marcella uttered an assent with the air of one whose mind is otherwise occupied; but the man caught the sense of the lady's words, although they were English.

"Ah, the picture pleases the signora," he said eagerly. "It is good, like everything the Signor Inglese paints," with a wave of the hand towards the card she held.

"Ah! is it Mr. Theyn's?" said Gabrielle. "Well, perhaps I shall see his studio, as I intend calling on him this afternoon. If his work is all as good as this, I shall want to see it."

"There is no one like him," was the man's response to the words he but half comprehended.

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CHAPTER III

THE ENGLISH ARTIST

"HERE is the Via Umberto," said Gabrielle, halting at the corner of a broad street with an enclosure in the centre, in which grew palms and aloes; "now where is No. 18? How do the numbers run? Oh, it will be on this side."

She moved forward with quick, light step. There was an eager look on her delicate piquant face. Every line of her slight erect figure, in its neat grey suit, bespoke determination and enterprise. None of the *cons* suggested by Marcella had had power to check her desire to establish herself in the villa. A little home of her own, if but a temporary one, on the sunny Riviera, amid luxuriant foliage and flowers, where she could live her life as she would, and be in subjection to no one—the idea was like heaven to Gabrielle Grant.

As she entered the vestibule of the tall house she had no sense of the momentous nature of the

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step she was taking, so blindly do we mortals rush upon our fate. She thought only of securing with as little delay as possible the residence she found so desirable. She hurried up the long staircase, pausing at each stage to bid Marcella, following painfully and breathlessly, to take her time, till the fourth floor was reached and she found herself confronted by a pair of tall, narrow doors, on one of which was a brass plate bearing the name of Basil Theyn.

Gabrielle touched the electric bell, and the door was almost immediately opened by a manservant in black clothes, who looked with some surprise at the young lady as he respectfully invited her to enter. The door opened into an ante-room, furnished with high-backed carved chairs and plaster casts. The servant led them through this into a room which had a cheerless uninviting aspect, and begged them to be seated while he informed his master of the lady's arrival. Gabrielle gave him her card, and seating herself in a handsome old chair, upholstered in faded red velvet, gazed about her with feminine interest. Marcella, still panting, sank on to a chair by the door, and made equally good use of her eyes.

"Well, it's plain enough there is no mistress here," she remarked, as her respiration grew

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easier. "No woman at all, I should say by the look of things."

"No one lives in this room, it is evident," said Gabrielle; "that is a beautiful vase, but why is it placed in the corner where the light scarcely touches it? That cabinet is fine. If it were filled with old china, how well it would look! Does it not strike you that the air of this room is very chill?"

"Like a vault," responded Marcella, "it smells as if the window were never opened, and I daresay it never is. Ah! I thought so," she added, rising and looking out of the window, "it looks into a court. No sun—that's bad. Now a woman would have a fire here, and she would certainly put a needle in this rug." So saying, Marcella planted her substantial foot on the torn edge of a fur rug.

Ere Gabrielle could reply, the door opened and the artist stood before her. He was a man of fine presence, and Gabrielle, who had the admiration of a slight person for a man of heroic build, was at once struck with his excellent proportions. He was by no means handsome; but the dark eyes that looked down on her from beneath rugged brows and shaggy eyebrows were at once keen and kindly in their gaze. He had thick dark hair, which he suffered to grow rather

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long and to fall carelessly over his forehead. His dress showed a certain negligence; but it was the carelessness of a gentleman, and Gabrielle knew instantly that such he was.

"I must apologize for keeping you waiting," he said, with a bow. "I was painting when your card was brought to me, and it was impossible for me to lay down my brush at the moment."

His voice had rich deep tones, of which Gabrielle grew increasingly conscious as she knew him better. She had learned to distrust a soft low voice in a man.

"I am come at an inconvenient hour, I fear," she said, "but I was told that I must apply to you for information respecting the little villa on the parade, which is to let."

"The Villa Buonsoggiorno?" he said.

"Ah! Is that its name?" exclaimed Gabrielle. "I did not notice. It is well named."

"Do you think so?" he responded, and the smile which lit up his heavy features quite changed the aspect of his face. "Then you understand Italian?"

"Hardly at all," said Gabrielle; "but I mean to learn it while I am here. Having seen the villa, it was easy to arrive at the meaning of its name."

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"It is indeed a charming little house," said the artist; "have you an idea that it might suit you as a residence?"

"It would suit me excellently," said Gabrielle. "The rooms are so pleasant and the garden so delightful that I long to establish myself there. I understand that it is to let for the winter; would you kindly tell me on what terms?"

"Certainly, and I can vouch for its being a very comfortable abode," he replied. "That is more, however, than can be said of this room. Will you kindly come into my studio, where we can talk over things more at our ease?"

Gabrielle rose with alacrity and followed him. Marcella did not move till the artist looked back and said to her with a smile: "Won't you come, too? We really cannot condemn you to remain in this dreary room."

"Yes, come, Marcella," said Gabrielle, and the maid followed.

The studio was a large lofty apartment, lighted from above. It was in some disorder, but Gabrielle saw at a glance that it contained many beautiful things. She looked with interest at the half-finished picture on the easel, the mahl stick and palette, and other evidences of recent work. Mr. Theyn led her towards the quaint corner fireplace, where a wood fire burned and

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two easy chairs stood upon an Oriental rug. Gabrielle sat down, delightfully at her ease. The painter busied himself with re-arranging the logs that they might burn more brightly, and as he dexterously manipulated the small bronze tongs, Gabrielle's attention was drawn to his hands. They were perfect in form, with long supple fingers, carefully tended, and the turn of the wrist was beautiful. She watched his movements with unconscious pleasure. Marcella seated herself at what she considered a respectful distance.

"I must tell you," said Theyn, as he laid down the tongs and leaned carelessly against the corner of the mantel-shelf, "that the 'Buonsoggiorno' belongs to my friend, the Signora Bertolini. She and her husband have there passed many winters of an ideal married life; but, unhappily, he died a few months ago, and, as you can easily conceive, she cannot endure to live alone in the home they shared, where her desolation must be continually mocked by memories of the happy past."

The artist suddenly paused. His words were arrested by the change he discerned in Gabrielle. Her eyes had sunk beneath his gaze, and a deep crimson flush, remarkable in one whose countenance was usually of a warm healthy paleness, swept over her face and extended even to the

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roots of her hair. It was evident that his words had touched some hidden chord that vibrated painfully; the more so that Gabrielle made an instinctive effort to hide her distress, pushing back her chair and raising her hand as if to screen her face from the glow of the fire.

"Ah! excuse me! The fire annoys you," he said quickly; "let me place this screen before you. There, that is better, is it not?"

Gabrielle thanked him and believed that her ruse had succeeded.

"So the Signora Bertolini has gone to spend the winter with her son, who is studying in Germany," he went on, "and I have undertaken to do my best to let the villa. I am doubtful whether she will ever make her home there again; but for the present her idea is to let it merely for this winter."

"That would be for six months, I suppose," said Gabrielle. "She would hardly be willing to let it for a shorter period, yet my future is so uncertain—it is just possible that I may have to return to America before the expiration of that time—that I would rather not make an agreement for more than three months."

"And you would really like to remain here for so long?" he said, with a faint accent of surprise; "there is no other part of Italy you

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wish to visit. But perhaps you have already been travelling on the Continent ? "

She shook her head with a slight smile, the sadness of which did not escape him.

" On the contrary," she said, " I only landed at Genoa from Boston two days ago. But I have no desire to travel. I was in Italy several years ago, and saw Rome and Florence and Venice. All I desire now is rest and quiet."

He could hardly conceal the surprise her words caused him. She looked so young, so full of life and energy, that a craving for rest and quiet was the last with which he would have credited her. His eyes rested keenly on her for a moment, and he was conscious of the nervous tension of her small, sensitive mouth, and the sadness which lurked in the grey eyes, with their long curling lashes. He marked the exquisite simplicity of her grey gown and the grace of every detail—the dainty embroidered collar, the gold arrow which held the black ribbon knotted below the neat little shoe which peeped from beneath the hem—nothing escaped him. There was about her a charming femininity which appealed to him strongly. What was the secret of her sadness and longing for rest ? "

" I am sure that Signora Bertolini would rather let her house for three months than not

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at all," he said, "and so far I have had few inquiries concerning it. The season on the Riviera does not really begin until after Christmas. It would be easier to let the villa at the end of January than now. I think there would be no difficulty if you wished to take it at once."

"That is my wish," said Gabrielle eagerly. "I long to settle myself there. Please tell me what are the terms."

He told her, and took pains to acquaint her with every particular that was likely to affect her decision. They only strengthened her desire to become mistress of the villa. She made no demur to the terms, which indeed were moderate, Signora Bertolini being more anxious that her house should be kept warm and dry than to reap a large profit by letting it.

"It all sounds delightful," exclaimed Gabrielle at length, "it will suit us exactly. What do you say, Marcella?"

Marcella was less enthusiastic. She spoke guardedly, but ventured to suggest that the house stood apart in its garden, and they were two lonely women. To whom should they look for help in case of an alarm at night?

"You need have no fear of burglars, I assure you," said Theyn, with a smile. "The people of San Remo are honest in their way. They see

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no harm in extorting from the unwary stranger double or treble the value of the goods with which they supply him; but they will not lay hands upon his property. However, you will not lack protection at the villa. The contadino, whom you saw, occupies with his wife a room at the back of the house. She will cook for you, and I can testify that she is mistress of the art, and he will act as a general factotum. Between them they will do the work of the house, if you approve of the arrangement."

"Why it is perfectly delightful!" exclaimed Gabrielle, clasping her hands with a childish gleefulness at which he smiled; "it makes everything so easy. Oh, please, will you find out as soon as possible whether I may take the house for three months?"

"Certainly; I will write at once to Signora Bertolini, and ask her to telegraph her reply," he said; "in that way we shall know in two days. Will that be soon enough for you?"

"It ought to be," said Gabrielle playfully. "I am not so unreasonable as to expect the matter to be settled off-hand. Now I will take up no more of your time. I have trespassed on it too long as it is."

"By no means," he replied, "and you must not go till you have had some tea."

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Gabrielle protested that she did not require tea; but he had touched the bell, and in less time than seemed possible the manservant entered with a tea equipage which did great credit to the taste of the bachelor artist, if bachelor he were.

"No English lady can exist without her afternoon tea," he said, as he poured out a cup for Gabrielle and then handed her the sugar and cream; "I do not know if American ladies are equally dependent on it."

"It is not such a general custom in America," said Gabrielle, looking admiringly at the beautiful Florentine cup which held the beverage; "but I am more English than American in this as in other things. My father was not a New Englander. He came from London to a business house at Boston when he was a young man, fell in love with a Boston girl, and made his home there thenceforth. So you see I can claim to be English, or at any rate only half American."

"Ah! is it so?" said Theyn. "Indeed, I should never have guessed that you were American if I had not seen Boston upon your card. You do not speak like an American."

"Really!" she exclaimed, "then I have not the terrible accent that some English people find so odious. I suppose I learned to speak like

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my father; I was so much with him while he lived."

A shadow fell on her face as she thought of the father who had been all the world to her till he passed away ere she had attained to womanhood. The next moment she rose to go. But it was impossible to cross the studio without pausing to gaze at one and another of the artist's pictures scattered here and there. They pleased her as much as the one she had seen in the little house. The same face indeed looked on her from many of them. It was as if the artist employed but one female model. Now it was Nina, the blind flower-girl, groping with outstretched hands; now it was a modern Judith, with pale, tense face, and eyes bright with an awful triumph; and now a contadina by a fountain with her pitcher of water gracefully poised upon her head.

Gabrielle's curiosity was roused. She thought of Andrea del Sarto, whose model was his wife. The face, which was of a purely Italian type, fascinated her. It was that of a woman in her early bloom, of fine figure, with full round throat, ample bust, and beautiful features. The magnificent dark eyes seemed to glow with passion, the full red lips had a proud, almost a defiant curve; the mass of blue-black hair so artistic-

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ally coiled about her head might have moved many a woman to envy.

"I see you have employed the same model for several pictures," said Gabrielle, "and unless you have greatly idealised her, she must be a most beautiful woman."

"She is," said the artist carelessly, "a queen might envy Maddalena's beauty and grace. But such women are not rare amid the contadini of this country. You may come upon one toiling amid the olives, or sitting by the roadside nursing her babe with the grace of a Madonna. But their beauty is short-lived, poor creatures!"

"So," thought Gabrielle, "Maddalena is not his wife, but a contadina."

"Before you go," said Theyn the next moment, "you must see my view." So saying he opened a door in the outer wall of the studio and invited Gabrielle to follow him up a narrow flight of steps to a *loggia* on the roof, which commanded a magnificent prospect. Palms and azaleas growing in large tubs, deck-chairs and a little table, made it a pleasant resort in which to lounge. A large tabby cat lay on the stone balustrade enjoying the rays of the declining sun, and a dog chained in the corner sprang forward with a bark of welcome as soon as his master appeared.

"You need not be afraid," said Theyn, quite

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needlessly, for Gabrielle loved dogs too well to fear them; "Pat is boisterous but perfectly good-tempered. He is a mischievous creature, though, and is just now in disgrace for destroying a design of mine."

"Poor fellow! I am sorry for him," said Gabrielle, patting his head and wondering if she were expected to admire such an ungainly animal, too big for a terrier and too small for any of the larger breeds. She wisely refrained from comment, and, turning her eyes upon the view, uttered a low cry of delight. From where she stood the whole sweep of the bay from Capo Verde to Capo Nero was visible. At this hour the sea was still as glass and of a clear bright blue which sparkled where the sun's rays touched it. To the left rose, one above another, like a flight of steps, the houses of the old town, a picturesque medley of roofs and façades, with vines clambering up the walls and decorating windows and roofs with their leaves and tendrils. Above were olive groves and mountains clothed with pines. Below lay the little harbour and quay, with here and there a white-sailed boat putting in or out, and men with red caps and blue jerseys leisurely pursuing their sea-side occupations.

"You like the view?" said the artist.

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"It is lovely," exclaimed Gabrielle, "I was charmed with the view which I get from my room at the hotel, but this is even more extensive and more interesting, because it embraces the old town. This is indeed a delightful little nook."

"Yes, it is pleasant," said Theyn, "I could not live in my studio as I do, if I had not this exit into the outer world. Here I come to smoke and meditate, and get rid of the cobwebs that cling to one's mind."

The glance which Gabrielle turned upon him was soft with sympathy. His dark eyes met it and held it for a moment; then, with a sudden sense of embarrassment, he averted his eyes and turned towards Pat.

"You find my view more satisfactory than my dog. Tell me now, did you ever see an uglier mongrel?"

"To be honest I cannot say that ever I did," replied Gabrielle. "If you had asked me to admire him, I should have said that the fine taste, of which I have seen so many proofs in your studio, had failed you when you chose your dog; but doubtless he has other qualities than his appearance to recommend him."

"That is so," said his owner; "he is really a dog of remarkable sagacity, and has a quaint sense of humour which led me to name him 'Pat.'

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My possession of him is not a matter of choice, but of chance. There is an official at San Remo known as the 'Cacciacane,' whose duty it is to capture stray dogs and keep them in durance vile till an owner inquires for them, or, if none is speedily forthcoming, to put them to death. I happened to encounter the 'Cacciacane' just as he had lassoed this poor beast and was dragging him off to his fate, followed by half the small population of the town. He had not then attained to his full beauty, but I saw at a glance that there was little likelihood that any one would think him worth the fee that the 'Cacciacane' would claim on his release. For the life of me I cannot say what made me take pity on him. I suppose his ugliness fascinated me, or touched some fibre of sympathy. Anyhow, I adopted him then and there, and I don't regret it, for Pat has nice ways of showing his gratitude, and is the most faithful creature, although, as to-day, the exuberance of his youthful spirits sometimes leads him into mischief."

"I love dogs, and I believe I could soon get very fond of Pat," said Gabrielle, looking at him with increased interest. "Marcella, I must have a dog if we live at the Villa. We could not have a better protector."

"I calculate you'll be satisfied with one that

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isn't just the fellow to this," said Marcella, dryly.

Theyn burst into a hearty laugh, in which Gabrielle was obliged to join. Then she bade him good-day, and took her departure, a little ashamed of the length of her visit.

When he had escorted her to the door of his dwelling, Theyn came back into the studio and took up his visitor's card. "Mrs. Abel Grant," he said to himself; "now I wonder what Mr. Abel Grant is like. She never mentioned her husband. Apparently she has left him behind with the resignation peculiar to American wives. Yet she is hardly an American."

He did not resume his painting; but lit a pipe and sat down with his eyes fixed on the glowing logs. Apparently the reverie into which he fell was not wholly pleasant, for after a few minutes he roused himself with a deep sigh, and going to his writing-table began his letter to the proprietor of the Villa Buonsoggiorno.

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CHAPTER IV

A RICH WOMAN

Two days later Basil Theyn was able to tell Gabrielle that Signora Bertolini would be pleased to let to her for three months the Villa Buonsoggiorno. He drew up a form of agreement which Gabrielle signed, and there being nothing to hinder her from taking possession of the house as soon as it could be put in order, she quitted the hotel at the end of a week and with much pride and pleasure established herself in the little domain which was to be her home for a season.

The house was in a state of cleanliness which satisfied even Marcella; but Gabrielle had too much individuality not to have ideas of her own with respect to the arrangement of the rooms. Within a few hours of their arrival Mr. Theyn appeared to ask if he could be of any service. Gabrielle declared that she and Marcella could

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manage splendidly; but she was glad to consult him about the changes she wished to make, and to obtain his approval of them in the absence of the Padrona. He was not content to merely approve; he would himself set about the alterations which Gabrielle desired. In vain she protested. He slipped off his coat and set to work. Like most artists he knew how to use a carpenter's tools, and was as handy a man as any lady could wish to have at her command. Strong as he was big, he was yet singularly gentle in his movements. It gave Gabrielle pleasure to watch him as with speed and skill, Marcella occasionally lending a hand, he accomplished her behests.

On the following day he helped her in another manner: Naturally the commencement of housekeeping in a strange place among people who spoke a foreign tongue was attended with some difficulty. Neither Gabrielle nor Marcella knew exactly how to set about it. Theyn was quick to see how he could serve them. He proposed to take them on a shopping expedition, and conducting them to the shops at which he was wont to deal, he helped Gabrielle to give her first orders. He assisted her to choose plants for the adornment of the hall and sitting-rooms. As they went from shop to shop Gabrielle noted

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that everywhere the artist received a hearty yet most respectful welcome.

"You are well known in San Remo, I see," she said. "You have lived here for some time, I suppose?"

"For nearly fifteen years," was his reply.

Gabrielle looked at him in some surprise.

"That is a long time," she said; "but you have been home several times in the interval, have you not?"

"My home is at San Remo, Mrs. Grant," he said.

"I beg your pardon," replied Gabrielle. "I meant England. You go there sometimes, I suppose?"

"I have not been back to England since I came here," he said. "I do not know that I shall ever go again. There is no one akin to me there."

"But your pictures," said Gabrielle, after a moment's pause. "Do you not exhibit in England?"

He shook his head with a smile.

"You have formed too flattering a conception of my merits as an artist, Mrs. Grant," he said, "the Art world of England knows me not. I have sold some pictures in Paris. A few of my landscapes and genre pictures find pur-

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chasers here; but those you saw in my studio are my failures, I fancy; at any rate they do not sell."

"Oh, I wish!" exclaimed Gabrielle impulsively, but the next moment she checked herself and presently said more quietly, "I should like to tell you how much I admire your work, but I know that my opinion is of little value."

"On the contrary," he replied, "it is a real encouragement to me to know that my work pleases you."

They had left the shops behind and were approaching the sea-wall when Gabrielle was accosted by a little old woman, who smilingly presented for her inspection a tiny dog which she carried on her arm.

"Oh, what a pet!" exclaimed Gabrielle. "Is it for sale?"

"Yes, but you must not buy it," said Theyn, smiling as he met the eager glance of her grey eyes. "Costanza is somewhat of a fraud, I regret to say. Her dogs have a way of disappearing from the homes of their purchasers. This one has been sold more than once, I dare warrant."

"Oh, you don't mean that!" exclaimed Gabrielle. "Does she train them to run away and then sell them over again? Oh, I cannot believe it! She looks so poor and feeble, I must

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give her something." So saying, she opened her purse and hurriedly put some silver into the old woman's hand. She took it with eagerness and began volubly to evoke blessings on the young lady.

Theyn looked at Gabrielle and shook his head.

"I suppose it is of no use to tell you how wrong it is to give to beggars," he said; "but really you will have no peace here if you allow your charitable impulses such free play. Begging is the curse of Italy. There are so many who will not work if they can get money for the asking."

He said a few words to Costanza in Italian to which she replied with smiles and deprecating gestures.

"I have told her that I will not have her continually worrying you," he said as they walked on. "I hope my words may have some effect. She and I are good friends, although I have never given her a soldo."

"I expect you have helped her in other ways," said Gabrielle. "How I wish I could speak to people as you do! I really must begin to study Italian. Can you tell me of a teacher?"

"Yes, I know one whom it would be a true charity to employ," he said. "She is of good family and well educated; but has been left a widow with the narrowest means. I believe

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she is an excellent teacher; but in a place like this she can get few pupils. She is glad to earn money also by doing any kind of needlework, in which she has considerable skill."

"I might perhaps employ her in that way too," said Gabrielle eagerly. "Please tell me where she may be found."

"I had better tell her that you would like her to call upon you," he said. "It is easy for me to communicate with her and you might have difficulty in finding the little room in which she lives at the top of a long stair."

"You are very kind," said Gabrielle; "but I feel that I have given you trouble enough already."

"You have given me no trouble at all," he replied, "I wish you would believe that it makes me happy to be of the least service to you."

As he said it they had reached the gate of the villa. The plants Gabrielle had bought were being carried into the house as they entered. Theyn helped to arrange them to the best effect and then took his departure. When he had gone Gabrielle looked about her with delighted eyes.

"How nice this room looks now!" she said. "What taste Mr. Theyn has and how good he is! He has wasted his whole morning on me. Fancy

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his having lived here for fifteen years! How old should you say he was, Marcella?"

"Well," said Marcella, "the first time I saw him I gave him every day of forty-five; but he gets to look younger as you know him better, especially when he smiles, and I begin to suspect he hasn't seen forty. I guess he hasn't found things too easy. There's the look in his face of a man that has tasted the bitter of life."

"Do you think so?" said Gabrielle thoughtfully. "It is strange, but though I know so little of him, I feel as if he were an old friend. I can hardly believe that ten days ago I had not heard his name."

"It's curious," said Marcella; "but I've always felt that time is not a matter of days and hours. Clocks are all very well in their way; useful to order one's meals by; but they can't measure one's life."

"That is very true," said Gabrielle. "Now I am not old as one counts years; but I feel as if I had lived a century."

"Oh, come, that's too much," said Marcella. "You're hardly more than a girl yet."

"A girl!" repeated Gabrielle. "Oh, what would I not give to be a girl again, with my life before me! If only I could go back to the time when I left school! If the last ten years of my

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life could be blotted out! Oh, it was cruel to marry me when I was only eighteen to a man with whom I had absolutely nothing in common."

Tears had risen to her eyes as she spoke.

"Never mind, dearie," said Marcella. "It is all over now, and there will be happier days by and by. It is not to be supposed that you will live lonely all your life. Sometime, please God, there will be one who will love you as you deserve to be loved, and who will win your love in return."

But Marcella's well meant words had a different effect from that she intended.

"Not a word of that kind, if you love me," exclaimed Gabrielle with flashing eyes. "You surely cannot suppose that, after such an experience as mine, I could ever think of marriage again? No, now I am a free woman, I will remain so. Do not let me hear you speak so again, Marcella!"

"Pardon me, Madam, for letting my silly tongue run away with me," said Marcella humbly resuming, as she was wont to do after an outburst of feeling, her more decorous manner, though Gabrielle had too strong a sense of the value of her maid's faithful affection to ever resent her familiarity. Marcella would gladly have recalled her too hasty attempt at consolation.

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She saw with distress that what she had dreaded had come to pass and Gabrielle was experiencing a reaction from the pleasurable excitement with which she had taken possession of the villa. Under its influence the past had been forgotten; but now its dark shadow had fallen on her again.

On the following morning there was no sunshine to greet them when they rose. The sky was overcast with clouds. Looking from her bedroom window Gabrielle saw the sea breaking in great foamy billows on the shore. Near the coast it was gray and colourless; but beyond lay broad bands of deep purple and vivid green, where from beneath the shifting clouds light broke upon its surface.

Gabrielle was pale and listless as she made her toilette. She chose to wear a black gown which made her look even more slight and wan than she was. The morning's post brought her letters from America. She looked at them long ere she had courage to open the envelopes. Several had been forwarded from Boston and contained cards or conventional expressions of condolence on her husband's terrible fate. One only was of importance. It was written by Mr. Meredith from the scene of the disaster, to which he had hastened as soon as the news reached Boston. A friend, and a gentleman, he wrote with delicate

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consideration for Mrs. Grant; but the facts he had to impart were inevitably painful. As yet Mr. Abel Grant's remains had not been identified. The bodies which had been brought up from the débris of the shattered train, imbedded at the bottom of the river, were many of them battered and mangled beyond recognition. Probably some would never be recovered. Mr. Meredith would wait and watch results for a few days longer. The remnant of a bag bearing Mr. A. Grant's initials had come to light, proving conclusively that he had travelled by that train. It might be that no other trace of him would be found. The fact that the accident had occurred in the early morning, when many of the passengers were still in their sleeping berths, added to the difficulty of identification. He assured Mrs. Grant that all the remains were reverently laid to rest with due observance of the rites of Christian burial. Mr. Meredith was too wise to attempt anything like condolence. He merely expressed his sympathy with Gabrielle in the great shock she had received. There was, he believed, no necessity for her immediate return. Mr. Abel Grant's affairs were in excellent order. She was probably aware that, with the exception of one or two legacies, Mr. Grant had bequeathed to her the

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whole of his property. Mr. Meredith would see to the proving of the will and take such steps on her behalf as could not be delayed.

The blood came and went in Gabrielle's face as she read the letter. When she laid it down her heart was sick with the horror of it all. Marcella watched her with dismay, but kept silence. There was nothing to be said or done. If Gabrielle could have wept it would have been better for her, but the fountain of her tears seemed dried. She lay back in her chair with colourless face and closed eyes.

Marcella had kindled a wood fire in the open grate, for in the absence of the sun the room felt chill. She stirred the logs and applied the bellows till the wood burned briskly. Then as she passed her mistress she laid her hand tenderly on the small white ones clasped in her lap. Gabrielle looked up and thanked her with a faint smile.

For a long time there was no sound in the room save the click of Marcella's needle as she sat sewing by the window. The thoughts passing through Gabrielle's mind were not such as could be uttered. At last Gabrielle roused herself and came to the window. She stood leaning against the sash and watching her maid's swift needle.

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"Do you know, Marcella," she asked, "that I am now a rich woman?"

"I'll allow I suspicioned as much," replied Marcella.

"How pleased poor mamma would have been!" said Gabrielle with a sad smile. "It's a pity she did not live to enjoy my wealth. How I hate the thought of it!"

"You couldn't get along without money," said Marcella.

"No; but I don't want so much," said Gabrielle. "Wealth does not give happiness. It is not good for women to have a great deal of money."

"May be," said Marcella; "and yet how much good they may do with it, if they're so minded."

"I don't know," said Gabrielle wearily. "It's not so easy to do good. Mr. Theyn evidently thinks that one may do harm by giving money. He told me I must not give to the beggars."

"Oh, beggars!" said Marcella. "You don't suppose the folks that most need help stand and hold out their hands! And there's other ways of doing good besides giving money."

"But how is one to know them," protested Gabrielle. "I would like to do good if I knew how. If only I had some one to tell me!"

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"I guess the Lord will show you how, if you have a mind to serve Him in the person of His poor and suffering ones," said Marcella; "but you can't expect to see your way all at once. We must walk by faith."

"But I have not your faith, my good Marcella," said Gabrielle.

"It's not likely you can have," said the maid, "seeing you haven't had my experience; but faith will come if you seek it. The walk of faith is like any other walk; power comes with exercise. You couldn't walk on stilts the first time you tried; but how startled your poor mamma was when she saw you stalking along at the bottom of the garden!"

Gabrielle laughed at the recollection—the kind of laugh which shows that tears are not far off.

"Ah! if I could go back to those days!" she said with a sigh that was almost a sob; "I don't know what I can do with my life. You see I really ought not to have this money. It has come to me through wrong-doing, and yet I did not think—I did not know."

"It was not your fault, dearie," exclaimed Marcella, throwing down her work. "How could you know, so young as you were? I can't let you blame yourself for that."

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"Ah! it is easy for you to say that," said Gabrielle, beginning to pace the room, "yet I ought to have known that it was wrong to marry a man just for the sake of his money. The memory of my father should have withheld me from it. Oh, may God keep me from doing wrong again for the sake of money, or of anything that seems to promise happiness!"

The afternoon was brighter than the morning had been, though luminous clouds, filmy, fantastic, and ever varying in their forms still hung about the horizon. Gabrielle was not to be persuaded to go beyond the garden. She wandered about there for a short time; then came back into the sitting-room and sat down to write to Mr. Meredith; but gave up the attempt ere she had written half a sheet.

"My head is so stupid; I cannot write," she cried, lying back in her chair.

"You'll feel better when you've had a cup of tea," said Marcella, as she set about kindling the spirit lamp.

"Tea! the universal feminine panacea!" said Gabrielle. "One's troubles and worries, even the consequences of one's sins it seems may be soothed by that. It moves one to self-contempt to find how the spirit is dominated by the body. It is only a St. Francis who can

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despise it and call it 'Brother Ass'; it is too strong for most of us."

"Well," said Marcella emphatically. "I'll allow that St. Francis was a saint; but for my part I don't see any religion in despising one of the most marvellous creations of God, which the human body most certainly is. The Apostle Paul called it the temple of God, and I calculate it's our duty to treat His temple with care and reverence.'"

She was setting out the tea things as she spoke, but the next moment she paused with a cup in her hand, startled by the sound of the house-bell.

There could be but one visitor. Marcella knew who was crossing the hall ere the contadina threw wide the door and announced, "*Il Signor Pittore.*"

A faint flush tinged Gabrielle's cheek as she rose to welcome him. She greeted him with cordiality, yet Theyn was instantly conscious of a change in her. The black dress, the paleness which had succeeded to the flush, her air of suffering did not escape his notice.

"The day is not so pleasant as yesterday," he said. "I see you have a fire; but it is not cold outside. You have been out, of course?"

"Not beyond the garden," said Gabrielle,

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"I am lazy to-day, lazy and a little headachy."

"Ah! you over-exerted yourself yesterday, I am afraid," he replied; "you were so eager to settle everything at once. I fancy you are one who lets herself be carried away by her enthusiasms."

"Indeed, no," said Gabrielle, "I really do not know that I have any enthusiasms."

"You surprise me," he said. "Yesterday you struck me as being almost enthusiastic about learning Italian. I came in to tell you that I have seen Signora Simonetti. Unfortunately she is suffering just now from a rather severe cold; but she hopes to be able to call on you in a day or two."

"That will be soon enough to begin the lessons; she must not come out before she is fit," said Gabrielle. "I have a great desire to learn Italian," she added after a second as if anxious to correct the apparent indifference of her reply. But Theyn saw that the eager anticipation was past; he guessed that something had occurred to depress her; but he showed no consciousness of this as he exerted himself to please and interest her. Apparently he was a master in the art of making himself agreeable. He took his tea with evident en-

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joyment, praising the excellence of Marcella's brewing. He coaxed Gabrielle to taste one and another of the little cakes made in San Remo, which he declared were better than those of any other place. He described the walks she must take when the days were brighter and as he talked his eyes were quietly studying Gabrielle, marking the droop of the little head which seemed too heavily weighted by its wealth of hair, the sad sweetness of the little mouth and the pensive wistfulness of expression which reminded him of the Madonnas of Perugino and Raphael, though the face was instinct with a strength of character which neither painter ever gave to his creation. He told her stories of his sketching expeditions till he succeeded in making her laugh. Marcella blessed him as she heard their voices through the open door of the little ante-room to which she had betaken herself with her sewing. When he departed a little later he left Gabrielle in a happier mood than he had found her. Yet her heart still had its bitterness. "How good he is!" she thought. "I wish he knew everything about me without my telling him. I shall never have the courage. Should I have been wiser if I had announced my widowhood as soon as I received the news and put on the conventional tokens of it?"

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CHAPTER V

A STATEMENT OF FACTS

Mrs. Barker, the wife of the consumptive-looking clergyman who had come to winter at San Remo, bereft of the parochial duties which her soul loved, and with her husband for the sole object of her care, found herself with ample leisure to observe her neighbours. Gabrielle, who was hardly aware of the lady's existence, would have been astonished to learn how much attention Mrs. Barker bestowed on her. Still less could she have guessed that, piqued because Mrs. Grant did not show eagerness to secure her friendship, Mrs. Barker had decided that she could not be a nice woman, since she was on such intimate terms with her maid as apparently to prefer her society to that of every one else. Mrs. Barker was a very pious woman, and regarded humility as one of the highest Christian graces; but it would have been impossible to persuade her that she was not innately superior

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to any one who served as a lady's maid, or that it was not her duty to keep such a one in "her place." No amount of explanation could have made her understand the warm tie of affection which bound Gabrielle to the faithful servant who had been more of a mother to her than her own mother had been.

Marcella was no ordinary woman. There was nothing small or mean about her. She was large-hearted and keen-witted, and had received a good education, of which she had made the most. She loved the best books scarcely less than her mistress, and Gabrielle would often make her share her pleasure by reading to her as she sat at work. She was no lady; but she had the delicacy of feeling and refinement of bearing which true religion will produce even in those who have had the least advantages. A noble woman in truth was Marcella Sage; but she had inherited the obloquy of the race so long enslaved in America. There was negro blood in her veins, and though she had always been free, her mother had been born in slavery, and was the child of her owner. Marcella felt the shame of this fact, though she was too honest and self-respecting to be ashamed of her race. A sense of social stigma had led her to hold herself aloof from those of her own class and to concentrate

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all the strength of her affection upon her mistress and her child.

No one knew better than Marcella the weak, frivolous nature of the woman whose service she entered when she was a girl of eighteen, and Gabrielle a mere child; but there are persons gifted with a fascination which wins them love, irrespective of their merits; and such a one was Gabrielle's mother. Marcella served her faithfully, and bore patiently with her uncertainty of temper and her innumerable caprices; but the more ardent love of that grand heart of hers went out towards Gabrielle. She had petted and comforted her as a child, she had understood her better than did her mother as she grew into womanhood, and she had been her refuge and help in the miseries of the uncongenial marriage into which she had been thrust.

Gabrielle was too proud and self-respecting to confide to any other the woes of her married life. There was little need to tell Marcella much; she understood without being told. But for her sympathy, it seemed to Gabrielle that she could not have borne her life. It was no wonder that she clung to this faithful friend. Yet Marcella felt, after the day that brought Gabrielle the knowledge of her widowhood, that, while it was impossible that their friendship

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could ever wane, there was no longer the same great need for her in Gabrielle's life. She believed that love, the love that is a woman's crown of happiness, would yet come to Gabrielle. Marcella, in her self-forgetful love, prayed that it might be so; and yet perhaps it was not without some subtle satisfaction that she heard Gabrielle passionately repudiate the idea.

When they rose the next morning, gray clouds still hung overhead; but above the horizon was a broad band of pale golden sky, and the sea was of a deep purplish blue, with only the faintest ripple on its surface. Gabrielle wore her black gown, but the gloom of the previous day had vanished from her bearing. She went into the garden after she had taken her breakfast, and wandered to and fro picking flowers and watching the changeful aspect of the sea as the clouds gradually broke up and dispersed. A little later she came into the room where Marcella was busy with some detail of her mistress' wardrobe.

"You can put that away, Marcella. As soon as I have arranged these flowers we will go out. I want to climb that hill behind us and get amongst the olives."

When they started, Gabrielle soon realized that she had been thoughtless to bring Marcella

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on such an expedition. The winding road they followed grew ever steeper and rougher as it ascended, making the stout woman pant and perspire painfully, though she struggled bravely on, refusing to halt for longer than was necessary to get breath. Soon it was no more than a narrow path between the olives, so rudely paved with cobble stones as to make walking far from easy.

"This is hardly a pleasant walk," said Gabrielle at last; "you look quite exhausted, Marcella. Let us sit down." So saying, she seated herself on the low stone wall which separated the path from the olive groves. An opening amid the trees to the right revealed a beautiful glimpse of the blue sea. Women were working amid the olives, their gay coloured bodices or the scarlet kerchiefs with which some of them had covered their heads affording bright gleams of colour amid the grey green of the foliage. Tiny children toddled beneath the boughs or played with the fallen olives. Heavily laden mules were coming down from the mountain, and women carrying great baskets of olives or huge bundles of wood on their heads.

With a groan Marcella seated herself on the wall. "I guess that's the roughest bit of walking I ever did in my life," she said. "The path

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is only fit for mules. How those women balance those great bundles on their heads and step it so briskly is beyond me. They might be trained acrobats. It's clear they're not reckoned to be weaker vessels here."

"No, indeed," said Gabrielle, "it seems to me that at San Remo the women work harder than the men."

"They do that in most places that ever I've known," said Marcella, "though I'll allow it's not such severe bodily toil as this. A man gets through his day's work and has done with it; but a woman's always keeping on."

"That does not apply to me I fear," said Gabrielle with a smile; "I have never done anything worth calling work except when I took that stall at the Fancy Fair."

"Haven't you?" said Marcella. "Well, I guess you've done what is harder—you've endured a great deal."

Gabrielle had risen and was looking about her. She made no response to her companion's words beyond a faint sigh.

"I am going on a little farther, Marcella," she said; "I want to climb higher. There must be a grand view if one could only get beyond the olives. No, sit still. I will not have you come another step. Don't wait for me if I do

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not return in a quarter of an hour, but walk slowly homeward."

So Gabrielle started forward at a brisker pace. She was fond of walking, and the roughness of the way did not deter her. As she passed the busy contadini they looked at her with wondering eyes, and wished her *buon giorno*. Between the trees she caught glimpses of more distant mountain slopes, with here and there the gleam of rich autumn tints. At last there was a break in the olives, and wandering a little from the path, she found the view she desired. The clearing had once been a homestead, for she saw before her a ruinous house with two cypresses keeping guard over it.

Approaching the house, Gabrielle looked down on a magnificent prospect. She was on the ridge of the mountain, and on either side lay a deep, green valley, covered with olives. Dotted here and there amid them were red-tiled cottages, giving a homely aspect to the landscape. Far below lay the houses of San Remo and a broad expanse of blue sea, for the whole semi-circle of the bay was visible, with the softly-rounded hills which enclose it looking strangely reduced from this height.

"What a lovely spot this is!" thought Gabrielle. "I should like to rebuild this little

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house and dwell here. Not that I am dissatisfied with my dear little house below; but it is surely better to live high. Yet what would poor Marcella do?"

She smiled at the thought; then, having gazed long, turned back to the road and directed her steps towards a little chapel which she perceived higher up, standing by the roadside amid the olives. She ascended the broad flight of shallow, well-worn steps which led to it; but found the door locked. Somewhat weary by this time, she seated herself on the steps. She had hardly done so when she became aware of a quick step, certainly not that of a contadino, descending the rough road. A tall man in a grey suit and picturesque grey felt hat came into view. Perceiving the lady, he halted with an exclamation of surprise. As the grey hat was lifted, Gabrielle recognized Mr. Theyn.

"Mrs. Grant!" he exclaimed. "Here! Alone! You are very courageous."

"What is there to demand courage?" Gabrielle asked with a smile as she gave him her hand. "I had to leave Marcella below; the climb was too much for her."

"I do not know that there is any danger," he replied. "The contadini are good, honest people as a rule; but it seems lonely for you to

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come so far by yourself. Will you let me be your escort when you want to make an expedition which is beyond Marcella's power?"

"You are very kind," said Gabrielle, the colour rising in her cheek; "but indeed I am accustomed to be independent, and rather enjoy my own company."

"I am quite sure that it is preferable to mine," said Theyn gravely.

"I did not mean that," said Gabrielle, vexed with herself for her tactless reply, "I only felt that I ought not to take up your time, which I know is precious. I thought you would be working in your studio this morning," she added, and then was annoyed with herself for having admitted that she had thought of him.

"Don't you know," he said as he seated himself on one of the lower steps and looked up at her with his keen, kindly eyes, "that a good part of a painter's life has to be passed out of doors?"

"I can easily imagine it," said Gabrielle, "especially since I have seen your lovely landscapes. But I suppose that you cannot sketch much at this season; and you have no sketching materials with you now."

"No, I have not been sketching this morning," he replied; "I am on my way from San

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Romolo, whither a little matter of business took me."

"San Romolo!" repeated Gabrielle.

"It is a village grouped about a monastery, high up on the mountain," he explained; "it would take you quite two hours to ascend from here. To San Romolo is a favourite excursion for visitors when the days are longer and warmer. You would find it too cold there at present."

"And you come from there now?" said Gabrielle, wondering at his energy, for it was not yet mid-day.

"Oh, that is nothing," he said; "I am used to the road, and I like a tramp. But for you, Mrs. Grant, it is another thing. Now confess, did you not find walking on such a road rather a penitential exercise?"

"I can't say I exactly enjoyed it," said Gabrielle, looking at her dainty boots, which the rough stones had not improved; "but it was worth it to see such a view as I had just now. I am charmed with these olives; they give such a touch of poetry to the landscape."

"I am glad they please you. Some people find them monotonous and depressing. They need a touch of colour such as that," he said, pointing to a mule which was passing, burdened

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with a heavy load, apparently a bundle of bedding rolled up in a crimson cloth. Then, looking back at her, he added with a smile, "Do you know, Mrs. Grant, that you, in that black dress, are sadly out of harmony with this scene? It is an artistic error—a blot upon the picture. Why do you wear it?"

There was a moment's silence. Gabrielle had coloured vividly. But the next moment she said, with an attempt at playfulness: "To keep me warm I suppose."

"Excuse me," he said, "another colour—a red gown for instance—would have answered the purpose equally well."

"Would you like to see me in a gown the colour of that mule's cloth?" Gabrielle asked.

"Not precisely that shade perhaps," he replied; "but I think you would look well in red."

"I used to like red," said Gabrielle; "but I have not worn a red frock for years."

"Are you bound by a vow to wear sad-coloured garments?" he asked playfully; but Gabrielle did not smile in response.

"I suppose I am fulfilling a sort of duty to society in wearing this gown," she said.

"Really!" he exclaimed. "What social convention can require you to wear black in the

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heartless to go on living as I have, telling no one, making no sign — but — but——" then utterance failed her.

"Why should I think you heartless?" he asked gently. "What right have I to judge you so? Forgive me that I have made you think of what is painful. Don't try to talk of it."

"But—but—I should like you to know," she said tremulously; 'it is not as you suppose. He—I—I was not happy with him. I ought never to have married him."

"Oh!" he said.

"Yes, I ought never to have married him," said Gabrielle again; "but I was so young, and I did it for poor mamma's sake. My father was never rich, and after his death we were poor, mamma and I; that is to say, we were poor for our position. Mamma was not strong, and she liked to live comfortably and to have everything as nice as possible. She suffered if she did not have all that she wanted. Father always sought to gratify her every wish; he wore himself out trying to make money for her. He told me when he was dying that I must take care of mamma. Mr. Grant had made money, and mamma said I must not mind his being rough and uncultured; every one respected him, and she was sure I should be happy with him. I

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did not expect *that*, but I thought of her happiness. He promised that she should have a home with us, and—everything that she could wish. I knew that she was in a very delicate state of health, and I thought it would save her life. I did it for her sake—do you understand?"

"I understand perfectly," he said in grave, deep tones.

"He was as good as his word; I must say that for him," continued Gabrielle. "He took a large house, and mamma had her own suite of rooms, beautifully furnished, and everything she wanted—while she lived. I believe she was happy; but it was not for long. The doctors discovered that she had an incurable malady and she died—less than a year after my marriage, and I—I——" Her voice quivered and broke.

"Don't try to tell me—I understand," he said; "it was bitter to find that your sacrifice had been in vain."

"Oh, it was hard!" she said. "I try not to blame poor mamma. I believe she really thought that all a woman wants to make her happy is plenty of money. But what happiness had I? When my husband found that I could never love him, his heart hardened towards me, and he made my life a misery."

There was a smothered exclamation from

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Theyn. He was leaning forward and digging his stick into the interstices of the stones at his feet with a look of fierce determination.

"I don't mean to say that he was actually cruel to me," continued Gabrielle; "but—but he was always contriving to give me pain. He could not bear me to have any pleasure apart from him. I once had a kitten, a tiny, fluffy, smoke-coloured Persian, which I dearly loved. One day when he came into my room she got in his way, and he caught her up and threw her out of the open window on to the lawn. One of his dogs, a big retriever, was there, and in a moment it seized my kitty, and I heard her backbone snap between his jaws. I screamed, but *he* laughed—laughed and said he was thankful there was an end to the little beast. I could have forgiven him if he had not laughed. God help me! Surely I can forgive him that laugh now!"

Gabrielle's voice shook. Her eyes were blinded by tears. The next moment she was conscious of a warm, strong hand clasping hers, and a deep voice, soft with feeling, said very low—"My poor child! What you must have suffered! And you think it your duty to wear black for such a one! Don't do it any longer, I entreat you."

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For a moment surprise held Gabrielle motionless. She let her hand lie in his, finding infinite comfort in that strong, manly clasp. But the next instant he gently released her hand, saying humbly, "Forgive me; I ought not to have presumed to address you so."

"No, no, there is nothing to forgive; I am glad to know that you are sorry for me," faltered Gabrielle, and carried away by emotion, she gave him back her hand. "You may say what you like to me since I know you are my friend."

"Indeed, indeed, it is my desire to be your friend," he said as he took the little hand and gently pressed it. Then he rose to his feet, and Gabrielle, hastily drying her eyes and striving for composure, rose too, and they turned their steps towards San Remo. Soon Gabrielle was smiling again, for there was a wonderful lightness in her heart as she took her way downward, with Theyn walking close beside her and watching that her little feet did not slip upon the awkward stones. It was such a relief to feel that he knew all about her.

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could not be sorry. She seemed to hear again the deep, subdued tones of his voice, to feel the warm, strong clasp of his hand. Yes, she was glad that he knew; it was good to have such a friend.

She was roused by Marcella's steps upon the gravel. She came to announce the arrival of Signora Simonetti, the Italian teacher.

"Oh, that is right," exclaimed Gabrielle, starting up. Once more life was full of interest. She was eager to commence the study of the beautiful Italian tongue. She longed to speak it, that she might be able to talk to the people about her, that she might have it in her power to sympathize with them and help them as did Basil Theyn.

Signora Simonetti, a tall, meagre-looking woman, neatly, but shabbily, dressed, yet with the bearing of a gentlewoman, was awaiting Gabrielle in the sitting-room. Gabrielle welcomed her cordially, enquired if her cold were better and hoped she was running no risk in coming out. The Italian responded with the utmost suavity. Her manner was most ingratiating; but Gabrielle would have liked her better if she had not shown such anxiety to please.

It was speedily arranged that Mrs. Grant should have a lesson every day, Sunday excepted, and

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the eyes of the poor teacher shone with satisfaction when she found that no attempt was made to reduce the fee she asked. Gabrielle noted with pity the signs of extreme poverty which the signora's appearance betrayed; but the impression produced on her by her teacher was not an agreeable one. Unfortunately plain living does not invariably lead to high-thinking. When it is a matter, not of choice, but of necessity, it may have the contrary effect. In Signora Simonetti's case the pinching of poverty, constantly prompting to a warm concern for self-interest, had engendered a narrow, petty habit of mind and a mean way of regarding her fellow-mortals of which Gabrielle was vaguely conscious even at this first interview.

Basil Theyn had been right in saying that she was a good teacher. She knew little English, which was all the better for Gabrielle; but she spoke French, and by the help of this language was able to make her meaning clear to Gabrielle. She gave her pupil a good lesson; but, as she corrected her pronunciation, or instructed her in the first rudiments of grammar, her eyes roamed round the room and nothing escaped their notice. At every opportunity she talked volubly.

"The room is different from what it was when

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Signora Bertolini was here. I used to visit her sometimes you know. You have changed it for the better. Does the Signor Inglese know that you have altered it? Ah! he comes here sometimes then! He was constantly here when it was Signor Bertolini's house. They were great friends. I suppose there was hardly a day when he did not come in. He is fond of the Italians, is Signor *Taine-Teen*—how do you say it? He laughs at me when I try to say his name. He makes no friends among the English—is not that strange? He doesn't like the English, although he is an Englishman."

"Indeed!" said Gabrielle, inclined to question the signora's right to discuss Mr. Theyn, yet interested in spite of herself. "Would you kindly say that again in Italian?"

The signora smilingly complied. For a few moments she busied herself with explaining certain peculiarities of idiom; but soon she was again talking of Mr. Theyn, though she now spoke in her own lauguage with slow and careful enunciation. "He is so good," she said. "Does not the signora think him good? Ah! I could tell her of many a kind deed he has done for the people of this place. He is not devout—not what you would call *religious* — but he is good."

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"I had imagined that he was not a Catholic," said Gabrielle with some constraint.

"Certainly he is not a Catholic," said Signora Simonetti, "neither is he a Protestant. He has no religion save the religion of the good heart. To live in charity with all men, to help the needy and comfort the sad; that must please the good God surely, signora, even if one never worships in a church or never pronounces the name of God."

Gabrielle murmured an assent; then hastily opened the book it had been decided they should read together. She began to read, and the signora listened and corrected, her keen eyes the while studying the young American and observing every detail of her appearance. When the lesson was over, and the signora was slowly drawing on her carefully-mended gloves, she startled Gabrielle by the suggestion — "The signora is a widow?"

The blood rushed into Gabrielle's face. What made the woman think she was a widow? She replied in the affirmative with a chilliness of manner which was not lost upon the signora.

"Excuse me," she said deprecatingly, "I too am a widow. We can understand and feel for each other, though your circumstances are so different from mine." She heaved a sigh as she

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spoke with eyes upon the ground. Gabrielle felt the stirring of impatience; but controlled herself and with gracious hospitality begged the signora to take a cup of tea ere she went away. The signora did not like tea; but she refrained from saying so and consoled herself for the unpalatable draught by consuming several of the sweet cakes that were offered with it.

"She will teach me well, I believe," said Gabrielle when her teacher had departed; "but—I wish I liked her better. What do you think of her, Marcella?"

"Well," said Marcella deliberately, "I guess I've seen people that I've taken to more readily; but I'll allow I felt some pity for her. There's a sick, pinched look about her somehow."

"So there is," said Gabrielle, "I am sure she is horribly poor. Oh, money is a horrid thing! Those who have too much get vain and vulgar and ostentatious, and those who have too little become mean and petty and sordid."

"I presume that man had some wisdom who prayed that he might have neither poverty nor riches," said Marcella.

"Yes," said Gabrielle musingly; "we must not be hard on her. It must be terrible to be stinted in food and clothing, as I fear she is. I mean to be kind to her, and perhaps I shall come

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to like her better. I have always been too hard on people. If I had had more patience in the past, things might have been better with me. If I could live the time over again, I would try to do differently."

"You bore your troubles like a saint," exclaimed Marcella vehemently.

"Oh, no," said Gabrielle smiling and shaking her head; "I was never a saint. Saints make people better by loving them; but my heart was full of hard, bitter thoughts. Ah! it is true as the signora said—the essence of true religion is the good heart."

"That's so," said Marcella, "but I am afraid the lady does not know that no man ever yet had a good heart till the blood of Christ had cleansed it. 'Out of the heart of man proceed evil thoughts' and all the black things to which they give birth."

Gabrielle did not reply. She seldom entered into religious discussion with her maid. She was inclined to regard Marcella's opinions as narrow and antiquated; she sometimes smiled at her little inconsistencies; but she knew how genuine was the goodness of heart that was the outcome of her simple faith. And all Marcella's theories respecting the natural evil of the human heart and the impossibility of human goodness

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broke down before her loving admiration for her young mistress. She did not believe in human perfection; yet Gabrielle was well-nigh perfect in her eyes.

A little later when Gabrielle was making her toilette for the evening and Marcella was engaged in brushing and dressing her beautiful hair, Gabrielle said suddenly: "I have a fancy to wear white this evening, Marcella—the white silk blouse."

"Certainly, madam," said Marcella, well pleased. She took great pains with the arrangement of the glossy raven hair, piling it high above the delicate brows in a style particularly becoming to her mistress. When she had donned the exquisitely-made bodice of ivory silk, cut low about the round, white throat encircled by a necklet of pearls, Gabrielle was absolutely beautiful in the eyes of her maid, who reflected that it was a pity that there was no one else to admire her. What a lonely life she led for one so young and full of charm!

But though grave and thoughtful, Gabrielle did not seem unhappy as she dined in solitude. She had had experiences which had taught her to prize her own society. When the meal was over she established herself with her Italian books in the little drawing-room, resolved to be very

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studious for the rest of the evening. But despite resolution it was not easy to apply herself. Her eyes wandered to a little painting which hung above the mantelshelf and which she had recognized as Theyn's on the day she took possession of the house. It was a simple little picture, representing the tryst of two rustic lovers amid the olives; but it had the poetry and the truth characteristic of all Theyn's work. The handsome, dark-eyed contadina with the scarlet kerchief must have been painted from the model Gabrielle had learned to call Maddalena. She wondered about her and felt an eager desire to see her, then checked herself and tried to concentrate her attention on the Italian grammar, only to find a little later that she was musing on what Signora Simonetti had told her respecting Theyn's religious attitude.

Annoyed with herself, she was making a more determined effort to study, when suddenly the tinkle of the door-bell thrilled her with a hope which was almost a conviction. In another instant she heard the step she had learned to know crossing the hall, and Theyn was ushered into her presence. As he advanced, smiling, to greet her, Gabrielle exclaimed at the sight of a little glossy head peeping from beneath his arm.

"Oh, what have you there? a dog!"

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"A little stranger for whom I would ask your hospitality," he said, as he placed the dog on the rug before her. It was a tiny animal with glossy, tawny coat and long ears.

"Oh, what a little beauty!" exclaimed Gabrielle. "But what is he? I can't quite make him out."

"He belongs to a breed peculiar to the Roman Campagna, known as *Lupetti*," said Theyn. "I brought his mother from Rome some years ago. They are most faithful and sagacious creatures and make splendid watch-dogs."

"He is a darling," cried Gabrielle rapturously. "Are you really going to give him to me?"

"If you will do me the honour of accepting him," said Theyn. "I only hope he will prove as good a dog as his mother has been."

"I shall be delighted; it is too good of you," said Gabrielle. "A dog is just what was wanting to make my little home complete."

Theyn's eyes gleamed with satisfaction as he looked down on her from his great height.

"I did not know you had another dog besides Pat," said Gabrielle. "I did not see it when I came to your studio."

"I have not another dog at my studio," he replied. "This doggie's mother lives at a cottage

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on the road to San Romolo. He was at a farm in the neighbourhood, and I left word this morning that I wanted him here to-night."

Gabrielle felt very grateful. Was it for this he had taken that long walk in the morning? "Do sit down," she said, "and tell me how I may win this little fellow's heart. At present he seems to shrink from me."

"He will not long do that," he said, and instead of seating himself, he kneeled beside her chair and placed the dog on her lap, holding him there while Gabrielle caressed him, till soon he nestled down well content to remain there. Then Theyn took a chair near and sat quietly observing Gabrielle and the dog. The change in her dress did not escape him. His eyes dwelt with pleasure on her dainty, silken attire and the rows of pearls gracing a neck scarcely less milky white. He studied furtively the delicate, piquant features, the small scarlet mouth, and the sweep of the long dark lashes on her cheek as she bent over the dog. She was fair in his eyes, and instinctively Gabrielle felt that she was so. A strange shyness overcame her. She felt a curious reluctance to lift her eyes from the dog's glossy coat and to meet the glance of the man of whose gaze she felt so nervously conscious. It was a relief when Marcella entered with coffee. Gabrielle began

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to feed the dog with biscuits, and he soon seemed quite at home with her. Presently Theyn's eyes fell on the Italian books, and he inquired with interest about the lesson. At once Gabrielle's shyness vanished. She showed him the books; they discussed them, and presently he was giving her a sort of impromptu lesson. He had made quite a long visit when he rose to depart; but to each the hour had seemed like a few minutes.

Outside the gate Theyn halted to light a cigar. Then, instead of turning homeward, he began to pace up and down the promenade, almost deserted at this hour. The air was soft and still; the sky bright with stars. The lights twinkling along the shore, the vague forms of the trees dimly visible to the right, the sweet perfume of blossoms, the soft swish of the waves on the beach, made the hour full of mystery and charm. Theyn wandered to and fro for some time, and as he went and came his eyes constantly sought the light which beamed from the room in which he had left Gabrielle. With mental vision he still saw the pretty interior, and the little fairy-like form, so dainty, so feminine, that had bent over the dog, coaxing and caressing till she had conquered his timidity.

"A spirit, yet a woman too," he said to himself, as he stood and looked across the dim, vast

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sea, which in its restless illimitable life seemed to express the boundless, inexpressible yearning of the human soul—" a sweet, true woman, and it will be good to have such an one for your friend; but remember that it can only be friendship. You must not, you dare not, dream of a closer tie."

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CHAPTER VII

A FRIEND

"Is he not a darling?" said Gabrielle the next day, as she proudly showed Signora Simonetti her new acquisition.

"*E carino*," said the Italian teacher, touching the tawny, silken head cautiously with the tips of her fingers; "it is a *Lupetto*, like the Signor Inglese's dog. It is he who has given it to the signora?"

Gabrielle nodded, and was vexed to feel the colour rising in her cheeks.

"He knew that I wanted a dog, and I could not very well find one for myself here," she said. "You have seen Mr. Theyn's *Lupetto* then?"

"Yes," said the signora, "I saw it when I was spending some summer weeks at San Romolo. You know that the signor has a little house at San Romolo?"

"No, I did not know it," said Gabrielle, receiving the news with a curious thrill of annoyance.

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She forgot that it was the most natural thing in the world that the signora should know more about Basil Theyn than she did.

"It is a little red house with two cypresses before it, standing in a garden," said the signora. "His dog is very fierce and makes a great outcry if any one approaches the house. The signor lives there in the summer and he goes there more or less every week. It is a charming little place."

"So," thought Gabrielle, "he was coming from that house when I met him yesterday morning. He had perhaps passed the night there and had not walked to San Romolo and back as I supposed." And she wondered why he had said nothing about his little house at San Romolo. But there was no reason in the world why he should. It was a matter of no importance. Gabrielle felt vexed with herself for letting such a trifle annoy her. Yet disturbed she certainly was, and the more so that she caught the signora regarding her with a subtle, watchful expression.

"Now, Lupo, there can be no more play," she said; "you must take a nap," and she settled him comfortably in a corner of the sofa. Then she seated herself at the table and opened her books with an air of resolution. For the next hour nothing was discussed save the peculiarities of the Italian language. When the lesson was

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over Gabrielle took her teacher into the garden and gathered some flowers for her.

"How well that creeper grows!" said the signora, pointing to a Japanese honeysuckle which covered one side of the arbour. "Signora Bertolini gave some cuttings to the Signor Inglese, and they have grown high against the front of his little red house."

"Then he has lived there for some time," said Gabrielle, as she bent to pick some wallflowers.

"Why, yes," said the signora, "it must be more than five years. He was very ill with fever, here at San Remo; he nearly died; but when he was a little better the doctor had him removed to San Romolo, and in that pure mountain air he grew well and strong. He liked the place so well that he took the Casa Rossa and furnished it as a summer abode."

Gabrielle listened with keen interest. She longed to ask a hundred questions, but checked the impulse and strove to maintain an appearance of indifference. She was far too simple, however, to deceive so astute a person as Signora Simonetti, who had a subtle smile on her thin, sunken visage as she walked away from the house.

In the afternoon Gabrielle took a walk, accompanied by Marcella. They followed the road along the shore towards the west and presently

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found themselves near the Campo Santo of San Remo.

"Would you not like to go in?" asked Marcella.

Gabrielle assented more for the sake of pleasing her maid, who had a predilection for cemeteries, than because she desired to meditate amongst the tombs; but she found much that was curious and interesting as they strolled amid the flowers and trees which make that "God's Acre" a pleasant spot. Some of the monuments were really beautiful.

"Marcella," said Gabrielle suddenly, "when I return to America I will have a handsome memorial raised to Mr. Grant's memory—a window, perhaps, in that church where his parents lie buried."

"Or a marble slab," suggested Marcella, for it struck her there was something incongruous in the idea of a window perpetuating the memory of one who had done so little to enlighten his fellow mortals. He had probably performed the most religious act of his life when he searched out and marked with a granite headstone the humble grave in which his parents slept.

They approached the upper part of the cemetery, where so many foreigners have found their last resting-place.

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"This is evidently where the English are buried," said Gabrielle. "How many English names there are! I suppose most of them were consumptives who came here with the vain hope of cheating death."

The next moment she was startled by encountering on a white stone the name which had become so familiar to her.

In Loving Memory of
MURIEL THEYN.
Who died January 20th, 18—. Aged 49 years.

The brevity of the inscription struck Gabrielle as strange. She stood looking at it for some moments without speaking. Marcella came to her side and read it also.

"It must be his mother's grave," said Gabrielle in a low voice.

"More likely than not," said Marcella, "though there's nothing to hinder it from being his aunt's."

"And it is almost fifteen years since she died," said Gabrielle, "and he said he had been fifteen years at San Remo. She must have died soon after he came here."

"Seems like it," said Marcella. "They came here for her health may be, and it was in vain. Strange that there's no mention of her husband though, if ever she had one."

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Gabrielle made no reply. She walked slowly away with the air of one who has found much food for meditation. She was very quiet as they walked homeward. When they reached the villa Gabrielle entered alone, while Marcella went on to the shops to make a few necessary purchases.

Gabrielle went into the house to find Lupo that she might take him for a run in the garden. Two cards lay on the table in the entry. They were those of the Rev. Charles and Mrs. Barker. Gabrielle dropped them with a sigh of vexation. "They mean well, I suppose," she said to herself, "but if only these good people would leave me alone! Shall I be thought very discourteous if I do not return this visit? Yet why must I pretend to desire this woman's society, when I am sure that she is utterly '*antipatica*' to me, as the Italians say. I like that word '*antipatica*'; it expresses the thing so exactly."

She called the dog and went into the garden. She stood for a while beneath the arbour, looking down into the road or across it to the sea, which lay tranquil, its waves gently caressing the shore. Already the sun had sunk out of sight and a purple haze lay along the horizon, melting into delicate violet which lost itself in the pale blue of the sky. A train was snorting in the station. It had just

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come in from Genoa. A few minutes later the hotel omnibuses began to pass beneath the wall, driving from the station. Gabrielle observed them with some curiosity. More luggage and more passengers than she had noticed before. People were beginning to arrive for the winter. Could it be so short a time since she and Marcella had driven along that road in the very omnibus now passing beneath the wall? That day seemed to have receded far into the distance, for already she felt herself an established resident at San Remo. But here was Marcella laden with small packages. Gabrielle went to meet her and they entered the house together.

Marcella hastened to prepare tea for her mistress, while Gabrielle played with the dog and regaled him with some of the dainty biscuits Marcella had bought. She had taught him to beg, but she was desirous of training him to more unusual accomplishments. The absurd results of her efforts moved her to merry laughter. Marcella liked to hear her laugh and to see her look so like the happy child she had been while her father yet lived. Marcella was sorry that she had that to tell her which might bring back the shadow of the past.

Gabrielle's attention was entirely occupied by the dog while she took her tea, and she asked

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no questions about her maid's shopping experiences.

"When I passed the station," Marcella remarked at last, "the train had just come in and there seemed to be a good many new arrivals."

"I know," said Gabrielle, "I saw the omnibuses go by, and there was such a lot of luggage. The *Bellevue* seemed pretty full."

"Yes," said Marcella, "there's an American party gone there."

"An American party!" said Gabrielle quickly. "How do you know? Who told you?"

"No one," said Marcella. "My own eyes informed me."

"What!" exclaimed Gabrielle, "you saw some one you knew?"

Marcella nodded. "I saw Mrs. Washington Hobbs amongst them," she said.

Gabrielle started. It was many years since she had seen Mrs. Washington Hobbs; not since her own wedding indeed. Mrs. Hobbs and her mother had been friends in girlhood, and for her mother's sake she had always professed an affection for Gabrielle which the girl had found herself unable to reciprocate. She had learned of the death of Mrs. Hobbs' husband some months before. Her face fell as she heard her maid's

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news. Mrs. Washington Hobbs was the last person she desired to see at San Remo.

"Did you say that she has gone to the *Bellevue?*" she asked.

"I presume so," said Marcella, "since I saw her getting into the *Bellevue* omnibus."

Gabrielle's face lengthened. She wished that Mrs. Hobbs had chosen another hotel. At the *Bellevue* there were ten chances to one that she would learn that Mrs. Abel Grant was residing at San Remo.

"Well, I can't help it," she said with a sigh. "If she looks me up, I must make the best of it. I am Abel Grant's widow, and I can't pretend to be any one else." She glanced sideways at her pretty grey dress as she spoke. Marcella looked at it too. She almost wished that she had persuaded her mistress to adopt the conventional garb of widowhood.

"Let us hope that she will not stay long," said Gabrielle, rising and moving from the room with the air of one who wishes to forget an unpleasant thought. Marcella devoutly hoped that Mrs. Hobbs' visit would be short; she felt unreasonably angry with her for her unwelcome appearance.

But neither on the next day, nor on any of the week which followed did Gabrielle encounter Mrs.

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Hobbs. It was perhaps easier for her to banish the lady from her mind that on each of these days she saw Basil Theyn. We are creatures of habit, and apparently the habit of "dropping in" at the Villa Buonsoggiorno had taken too strong a hold on him to be lightly broken. Certainly he appeared there almost every day on some pretext or other.

The weather was lovely. Brilliant sunshine and a fresh northerly breeze made walking delightful for the robust. Marcella's walking powers being so limited, it was but natural that Gabrielle should avail herself of Theyn's escort. He knew the neighbourhood thoroughly and could lead her to the best points of view. She greatly enjoyed their first ramble together. They took Lupo with them that he might learn to follow his mistress dutifully. When they reached the point in the main road where the narrow, steep path to San Romolo branches off the dog darted eagerly in that direction.

"He knows the way to his old home," remarked Theyn. "You do not wish to go in that direction, do you, Mrs. Grant?"

"Oh, no," said Gabrielle. "I leave it to you to choose the walk, and I should think you would prefer another road, as this must be so well known to you."

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He looked at her with such a keen, inquiring glance that Gabrielle's colour rose.

"Excuse me," she said, "Signora Simonetti told me that you have a house at San Romolo."

"A house!" he said, elevating his brows; "say rather a cottage—a little place where I live when I want to work in the open."

"Signora Simonetti spoke of it as a charming little house," said Gabrielle.

"Did she?" he said with a smile. "I am afraid the signora's tongue is rather given to exaggeration and she is too fond of talking about her neighbours."

Gabrielle wished she could recall her words. Did he not like her to know that he had the house at San Romolo? He had turned back to call the dog and she walked on slowly alone. When he reached her side a few moments later and looked down into her face he seemed to divine her thoughts, for he said, "The 'Casa Rossa' as the natives call it, *is* rather pretty—from the outside. If it were a less rustic abode, I should like to ask you to come and see it some day."

"Rustic is not an adjective which repels me," said Gabrielle. "I find rustic things charming."

"And so they are," said the artist, "but I must confess that my ménage at the Casa Rossa

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is rather too rough for me to feel comfortable in entertaining ladies there. If I can persuade you to come out there in the spring, we will call it a picnic. This is hardly the season for San Romolo."

"I may not be here in the spring," said Gabrielle. "It is probable that I shall have to return to America before then."

He looked at her but said nothing. His expression was thoughtful as they walked on in silence. The long pause made his words seem irrelevant when he said at last:—

"The spring is a long way off. Perhaps we may find a day suitable for the excursion before the colder weather sets in."

Gabrielle murmured an assent, but was willing to let the matter drop. She forgot her momentary vexation in pleasure at the beauty of the path they were now following. It wound along the bank of a rushing mountain stream, and on the other side were vines glowing with red and yellow leaves. It was pleasant to watch her vivid enjoyment of the scene. Now she was gathering the big, pink-tipped daisies which grew beside the path, and now exulting over a bed of violets, deep within the thicket, which she had tracked by their fragrance. In her freshness and spontaneity she seemed to him like a child, and it was

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hard to believe that she had passed through such an experience as she had revealed to him. He was moved to thankfulness at the thought that it was over. She had borne life's heaviest yoke, and the troubles the future might bring must be small in comparison, it seemed to him. All he could do to brighten her stay at San Remo should be done, and afterwards—but he would not think of the afterwards.

They had made a long round when at last they re-entered San Remo by another road. Just within the town they met Mrs. Barker driving with her husband. The eyes of the clergyman's wife opened wide when she saw Gabrielle and her companion, and she seemed too surprised to be able to recognize her very cordially. But Gabrielle only smiled as she passed on. What Mrs. Barker thought seemed to her of small importance.

Theyn bade Gabrielle good-bye at the gate of the villa. She went into the house carrying Lupo, who made no pretence of not being tired. Gabrielle fed him with milk and biscuits ere she took her own tea. As she bent over her pet she talked fond nonsense to him.

"Poor Lupo! Was he very tired? I must take care of my dear, wee friend. 'Dogs are the friends of men,' Lupo. How well I remember that sentence in *Hall's French Course* when first

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I began to write the exercises in my round, childish hand! Ah! friends are precious. It is good to have a friend, Lupo. Friendship is so uplifting and fortifying. A woman wants nothing if she has a friend. Don't you agree with me, Lupo?"

Lupo uttered a short bark, which meant that he would like a solid proof of friendship in the form of a sponge-cake. Gabrielle felt sure it signified assent, but gave him the cake all the same.

Meanwhile Theyn, having reached his studio and lighted his pipe, was musing in somewhat similar fashion, but in no such mood of self-deception. He knew that the "eternal womanly" in Gabrielle had laid hold of him with a fascination far stronger than any bond of friendship.

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CHAPTER VIII

MRS. WASHINGTON HOBBS

"I AM so happy, Lupo," Gabrielle whispered to her pet one afternoon, as she held him in her arms and rested her cheek against his soft, glossy head. "I like my life here so much that I do not wish anything to be different. I only want all to go on as it is."

Unfortunately it is not in the nature of things to continue as they are. Change is a law of life. Nor is it often given to us to know when we are happy; we recognize our happiness after it is gone.

Gabrielle's pretty sitting-room was full of flowers. A china bowl held some exquisite roses which had been brought to her on the previous evening by Basil Theyn. The sunshine streamed in at the open window and she stood fearlessly in its radiance, looking as bright as the day. Her gown was of a silky black material flecked with white. It had a broad collar and

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cuffs of white lace, and she wore her pearls about her throat. Guiltless of colour as it was, her attire was hardly suggestive of mourning, and her eyes shone with the happiness she had just expressed. Then the door opened, the voice of the *contadina* announced a visitor, and Mrs. Washington Hobbs entered.

She was a tall, portly woman, and decidedly impressive as she advanced, dressed in the most correct widow's mourning of rich dull silk and lavish crape. She had a fine Roman profile and large, dark eyes. The sombre bonnet with its white border and sweeping veil suited her well, as she was possibly not unaware.

"My dear Gabrielle!" she exclaimed, in accents of eager affection, as soon as she was inside the door; then paused and looked at Gabrielle with an expression of astonishment. In spite of herself Gabrielle felt the colour mounting to the roots of her hair. Mrs. Hobbs recovered herself and came on with outstretched arms. "My dear Gabrielle! To think I should find you here, and thus!"

"Indeed, it is surprising that we should meet so far from home," said Gabrielle, not quite sure as to the significance of Mrs. Hobbs' "*thus*"; but receiving her fervent kisses with as good a grace as possible.

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"And under such circumstances," said Mrs. Hobbs, with something like a sob. "Oh, my dear girl, I feel for you so much, since I too have suffered the same cruel loss. But you are so calm. It is true, is it not, that Mr. Abel Grant was in that terrible railway accident? Do you know, for a moment, after I saw you, I asked myself if there could be any mistake?"

"It is true," said Gabrielle quietly. She was very pale, but perfectly self-possessed. "Pray sit down, Mrs. Hobbs. Be quiet, Lupo."

And she laid hands on Lupo, who had assumed an inimical aspect towards her visitor and was barking at her with all the force at his command, while Mrs. Hobbs, gathering her skirts about her, regarded him with an uneasy air.

"That little dog of yours is quite safe, I suppose?" she said.

"As safe as a lamb, although he bears the name of Wolf," said Gabrielle. "He does not often make such an outcry."

Then, as Lupo persisted in expressing his dislike to the stranger, she put him outside the window, which she closed. Mrs. Hobbs drew a sigh of relief. "I have thought of you so much, dear Gabrielle," she said, "but I little expected to find you here, for I did not know you had gone to Europe. Why did you cease to write to me

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after your dear mother's death? But I must not blame you now. I have been travelling for six months. I was in London when I heard of the sad event, and I wrote to you at once; but as I sent the letter to Boston you of course have not received it."

"You were very kind," said Gabrielle. "No, I have not received it. You are surprised to see me not wearing mourning," she added after a moment, responding to the thought she saw occupied Mrs. Hobbs' mind.

"I was indeed surprised," replied that lady. "I confess I was quite taken aback; but I presume you found it impossible to get proper mourning here."

"I have not tried," said Gabrielle. "It is not a thing to which I attach any importance, and I thought it would be time enough to assume it when I return to America. I should be sorry not to show due respect to Mr. Grant's memory; but, as no one knows me here, it does not matter."

Mrs. Washington Hobbs looked and felt shocked. "Of course, if you regard it in that light," she said constrainedly; "but there are often more people who know us than we are aware of, and you might be judged in a way that would cause you pain."

"Oh, as for that," said Gabrielle proudly, "I

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am afraid I care nothing for the judgment of people who are indifferent to me."

Mrs. Hobbs was silent for a few moments while her eye took in every detail of Gabrielle's tasteful toilette. She had already confided to Mrs. Barker and other ladies at the *Hotel Bellevue* all she knew—and rather more—concerning Gabrielle, had heard them express astonishment on learning that she was a widow, and comment severely on the way in which she had deported herself since coming to San Remo; but she did not think it necessary to warn Gabrielle of this.

"Well," she said at length with a soft sigh, "with me it was not a question of other people's feelings, but of my own. I simply could not have worn anything but black, so overwhelmed with grief as I was. I sat for a week in a darkened room and could be persuaded to see no one. I felt that life was over with me too; but dear Dr. Peterson showed me how wrong it was to give way to despair. Since then, dear Gabrielle, I have found great consolation in religion. We learn our dependence on God when our earthly supports are removed. May your sorrow teach you, as mine has taught me, to look above!"

Gabrielle was silent. She remembered Mr. Hobbs, a nervous, shrinking little man, with apologetic manners, completely dominated by his

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wife, and she wondered in what way he had been a support to her.

"My dear Gabrielle," said Mrs. Hobbs, after a prolonged pause, "you know that I feel as a mother towards you, and since your dear mother is no longer here to guide you, I trust you will not take it amiss if I speak to you frankly in her stead."

"Certainly not," said Gabrielle, "you may be as frank as you please, Mrs. Hobbs."

"You know, dear, that you are in a most difficult and responsible position," said Mrs. Hobbs.

"Responsible?" said Gabrielle.

"God has committed to you the stewardship of wealth," said Mrs. Hobbs gravely; "that is a great responsibility."

"I know it," said Gabrielle. "I wish I were not so rich."

"That is an idle wish," said Mrs. Hobbs; "we are bound to accept the position God has called us to fill."

"But I am not sure that God ever meant me to fill such an one," said Gabrielle.

"My dear!" said Mrs. Hobbs, with a reproving air, "His giving you this wealth is a proof that He intends you to use it in His service. It is a talent for which you must account to Him."

Gabrielle was silent.

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"I hear," continued Mrs. Hobbs, "that you have taken this villa and are living here by yourself. Is that wise, my dear Gabrielle?"

"I am not living alone," said Gabrielle, "I have Marcella with me. You remember Marcella?"

"To be sure, I remember your mother's faithful maid," said Mrs. Hobbs; "but a servant, however faithful, is not the companion you need."

"Marcella is far more than a servant," said Gabrielle. "She is a good and wise woman, and, what is more, my nearest and truest friend."

"I know she is of an excellent character," said Mrs. Hobbs; "but it is impossible that a maid can be the kind of friend you want. You are hardly more than a girl, my dear Gabrielle, and a young widow cannot be too circumspect. You need an experienced friend to advise and guide you."

The colour rose in Gabrielle's face. Her grey eyes darkened and gleamed with resentment as she said: "A girl! a girl! How little you understand me, or my needs! It seems to me that in the past I had too much advice and guidance. For the future, I mean to live my own life."

"My dear, I did not mean that you should be controlled," replied Mrs. Hobbs, "but only that it would be well for you to have the society of an

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experienced gentlewoman. Believe me, there are many reasons why you ought not to live alone. I feel this so much that, though I had planned differently, I would stay here the whole winter in order to be of use to you. You can ask of me what you will. You are alone in the world, and I am alone; surely we can be of mutual assistance to one another."

"If I can help you in any way, Mrs. Hobbs, I am sure I shall be most happy," replied Gabrielle; "and if I need help from you I will not hesitate to ask for it; but do not be too sure that you know what is good for me. It is many years since we last met, and I have changed much in the interval, as doubtless you have also."

"My affection for you, Gabrielle, has known no change," said Mrs. Hobbs. "Oh, my dear child, when I saw you looking so sweet in your bridal white, how little I thought that your wedded happiness would be so brief, or that I——"

But here Mrs. Hobbs' emotion threatened to overcome her. She began to search for her handkerchief, while Gabrielle, feeling that further allusions to her wedded happiness would drive her desperate, tried to cause a diversion by ringing for tea.

But Mrs. Hobbs' visit did not soon terminate.

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She was never at a loss for words, and they flowed on now in a smooth, self-complacent stream.

"I have interested myself much in Christian work since I lost my husband," she said. "That is what you should do, Gabrielle. It is the best way to rise above our personal sorrows. I wish I could persuade you to join our Sisterhood of Faith. It is a most helpful association. I am holding a little meeting at the hotel to-morrow afternoon to explain our aims and ends. Will you come?"

"I am afraid I cannot do that," said Gabrielle.

"Why not?" asked Mrs. Hobbs. "Do not, I pray you, refuse hastily what may be a great means of blessing. My little meetings have been helpful to many. Mr. Barker has promised to come. Poor man, he was in a sadly unenlightened state; quite ignorant of the true meaning of the Word; but my teaching has opened his eyes. You will come?"

But Gabrielle, feeling no inclination to sit as a disciple at the feet of Mrs. Washington Hobbs, still declined the invitation. After prolonged embraces, Mrs. Hobbs took her departure. Almost immediately Marcella, doubtless curious to learn what had passed, entered the room to remove the tea-things. She found her mistress

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flushed by excitement, her mood one in which exasperation mingled with amusement.

"Marcella," she said, "Mrs. Washington Hobbs wishes to take up her abode with me here in the capacity of motherly friend."

"Really," said Marcella, "I presume you were hardly disposed to agree off-hand to that arrangement."

"Hardly," laughed Gabrielle. "She has gone away dreadfully shocked at me because I am so heartless as to mingle white with my black, and I have put the crowning stroke to the enormity of my conduct by refusing to attend a little meeting which she is to conduct to-morrow."

"She looks exceedingly well," said Marcella irrelevantly. "One can see that she has led an easy life of late."

"On the contrary, she has been in the depths of affliction," said Gabrielle. "Oh, dear!" she added, with an air of impatience, "why has she irritated me so? Why need I mind what she, or any other person, thinks of me? I have committed no crime in refusing to wear weeds. What does it matter? I *will* live my own life."

"That's not easy though," said Marcella. "'No man liveth to himself,' and I guess we've all got leading strings, or reins, or bonds of some kind to hold us in check; but there is no manner

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of reason why you should be guided by Mrs. Hobbs' ideas."

"I should think not indeed," said Gabrielle. "Whatever the future may hold for me, I am fully resolved that never again will I submit my judgment to another's will."

The shadow was on her face which always came when her mind reverted to the past. The next moment there was the sound of an opening door, a step in the hall, and Gabrielle's heart leaped with delight. Marcella saw the swift change of expression, and her heart grew heavy with a foreboding she could not have explained. But Gabrielle was conscious only of a deep sense of comfort, a nearness, which was not of the body but of the spirit, as she looked up into Theyn's face and put her hand in his. Her smile was radiant, yet by some secret prescience he knew that she had been disturbed.

"What is the matter?" he asked, when the door had closed upon Marcella and the tea things. He had taken a chair near Gabrielle and was surveying her with the intent, lingering gaze of—friendship. "You have been worried. Was it the severe-looking lady I encountered at the gate?"

Gabrielle laughed; but tears sprang to her eyes, called thither by the grave kindness of his manner. Soon she was recounting to him all that

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had happened. He listened with keen interest, his dark eyes eloquent of comprehension and sympathy.

"I hope she will not visit you again," he said. "You must not be troubled by her, indeed."

"She was my mother's friend," said Gabrielle. "I could not refuse to see her."

"Then you must make up your mind not to care what she says," he replied. "There is no peace or freedom for us till we learn to do that. 'They say. What say they? Let them say,' is the proper attitude of mind. Would not a long walk to-morrow help to banish Mrs. Hobbs and her dismal platitudes from your brain? What do you say to our going to Bussana?"

"Bussana!" said Gabrielle, "where is that?"

"It is a place about five miles from here, which was wrecked by the earthquake of ten years ago;" he said. "The skeleton of the village remains and is a picturesque though melancholy sight. A modern town has been built at the foot of the hill, and there is a decent hotel where we could lunch, if you pleased. Could you be ready by ten to-morrow? Would that be too early a start for you?"

"Not at all," said Gabrielle. "I shall enjoy it so much; but can you really afford to give up

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so much time to me? How about your painting?"

"It is partly for that I wish to go," he said. "I have an idea for a picture, for which I want to make one or two sketches at Bussana. Not that I mean to work to-morrow; but only to look about and consult with you and avail myself of any suggestions you may have to offer."

"Oh, I could make no suggestion that would be of the least use," said Gabrielle who, however, looked as if the idea gave her pleasure.

"You are mistaken," he replied. "Painters have always owed much to the fine taste and intuitive perception of their women friends. Then I may call for you at ten to-morrow?"

"Thank you," said Gabrielle, her face now aglow with colour; "but how about Marcella? Could she manage the walk, do you think?"

"Hardly, I fear," he said. "Of course, we could drive as far as the present town of Bussana. From there the ascent to the old town is a pretty stiff climb; the path is a series of rugged steps; but she could ride up on a donkey perhaps."

Gabrielle laughed. "Poor Marcella!" she said, "we will not condemn her to take such a ride. It would be cruel to both her and the donkey." And the question of Marcella's going was waived. Gabrielle felt that she was setting aside

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CHAPTER IX

AT BUSSANA

When Gabrielle set out with Theyn on the following morning, she no longer felt irritated with Mrs. Hobbs, nor did she care in the least how she, or any one else, might judge her. In her trim grey walking dress and the little grey toque, in which a black feather had taken the place of the scarlet quill, she looked as neat as a Quaker, and her face had somewhat of the expression of calm self-possession and inward serenity that we are wont to associate with women of the Society of Friends. She felt strong in her resolve to forget the past with its mistakes and regrets, and to live nobly and truly in the future, guided by the wisdom which had been won at so sore a cost.

Nothing more had been said about Marcella's accompanying them, and that good woman, as she watched them walk away, was by no means easy in her mind. She liked Theyn, but she could not help reflecting how little her mistress knew

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which was the first building the people set themselves to raise after their town had been wrecked by the earthquake. Passing through the streets, they began to ascend by a steep narrow path to the old town which they saw above them, picturesquely perched on the green hillside. As they followed the windings of the path, they looked down into a long narrow valley, planted with olives. Here and there the grey-green of the prevailing foliage was relieved by a *vigna*, bright with the flaming hues of the dying vine leaves, or a red-tiled cottage, guarded by sentinel cypresses. A double range of hills, veiled in the softest blue of distance, closed in the prospect.

"How pretty the little town looks!" said Gabrielle. "The church tower stands so proudly erect, I can hardly believe that it is a deserted place."

"It is strange that the tower remained standing while the church itself fell into ruins," said Theyn.

"It stands as a witness to the things that cannot be shaken," said Gabrielle. "It should have a cross upon its summit."

"Why?" asked Theyn with a smile. "Have you such faith in orthodox Christianity that you believe it can never be overthrown?"

"I have no great faith in *orthodox* Christianity,"

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replied Gabrielle. "Who shall decide what is orthodox? I pin my faith to no school of theology, no system, no church; but I believe in Christ. System and dogmas may be destroyed, as that church was; but the living Christ remains, and His kingdom shall know no end."

"The gates of Hell shall not prevail against it," said Theyn. "That is the old legend of the priests. They see in the Church of Rome the kingdom of Christ."

"They may profess to see it," said Gabrielle, "but it must be a narrow and unenlightened mind that can suppose that any visible organization can comprise the kingdom of God. You agree with me surely?"

"I!" said Theyn. "I know nothing of these things. I am outside all the churches."

"But you believe in Christ?" said Gabrielle.

He did not answer for a moment, while he stood deliberating with himself.

"Perhaps—yes, in a way I do," he said. "I believe in goodness—when I see it; and Christ was incarnate Goodness. I believe in beauty—beauty of life and soul and character; and I admit that the symmetry of His character was perfect—but I do not believe in Him as you do."

"How do you know how I believe in Him?" Gabrielle asked.

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"Oh, I judge you by other women whom I have known," he replied. "Most women are religious. A woman absolutely without religious faith is a *rara avis*, and as unpleasant as she is rare. My mother was a believer. I had a religious upbringing. I know both the doctrines and the practice of modern Christians. I believe in neither."

He spoke in a hard dry tone, and there was a look on his face Gabrielle had not before seen there. It was the look of a man with a bitter grievance at his heart, and it came home to Gabrielle like a revelation. Marcella was right. This was a man who had suffered, and it had gone badly with him. She walked on in silence for some moments.

They were now close to the town, and the path widened out into a little terrace. A low wall bordered it. Gabrielle halted and sat for a moment on the wall, looking down. Beneath it the soil shelved sharply away, and many feet below was a piece of strangely broken ground. There were large conical mounds of earth, covered with a wealth of vegetation, and huge blocks of stone, amid which young trees—oaks, ashes, and firs—were growing in an admired disorder of Nature's own making.

"What a curious wilderness of a place!" said

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ghosts who revisit their earthly haunts, I imagine."

"Like the wife who visits her successor in Whittier's poem," said Gabrielle. "Certainly these poor ghosts have no pain of that kind."

"This was the Sindaco's house," said Theyn, leading the way into a house of a somewhat more imposing description than the rest. Behind the house lay a square courtyard, in the centre of which was a well with a handsome stone coping. As Gabrielle bent to look into it she exclaimed at the beauty of the vividly green maiden-hair which fringed the deep shaft. She recoiled in momentary alarm as from the depth of the well a mocking voice seemed to repeat her words.

"What a marvellous echo!" she said. "It gave me quite a shock. How cold that water must be! If only one could get at it!"

"It is impossible, I fear," said Theyn. "Bucket and rope have long disappeared. Are you thirsty?"

Gabrielle shook her head. "It is only a woman's yearning for the unattainable which makes me desire the water, just because it is beyond my reach," she said. "Shall we go through the house? I feel as if I were taking an unwarrantable liberty in invading another person's

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dwelling in this way. Look at that cupboard! What a convenient one it seems!"

"Why, I declare," she added as she opened it, "here is a dish left behind! To be sure, it is badly cracked and chipped, but I wonder it has been allowed to remain. And this door too! I should have thought it would have been carried off for the sake of the wood."

"I fancy the natives have a superstitious dread of committing depredations here," said Theyn. "They regard the place as unholy since it received such a signal token of the wrath of Heaven. Do you see that lovely orange tree below? There must surely be some powerful reason which has restrained the boys of this neighbourhood from stripping it of its fruit."

Gabrielle looked out of the window, and saw in the direction to which he pointed a fine orange tree laden with golden fruit, apparently quite fit to be picked.

"What a beautiful tree!" she exclaimed. "How full of life it looks amid the desolation which surrounds it! Now, don't you want to make a sketch? Why, you have brought no sketch-book?"

"Yes, I have this," he said, producing a small book from his pocket; "but I do not mean to sketch to-day—only to look about and get ideas."

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"Oh, but do sketch that bit of broken wall and the tree and the window beyond," she said. "What is it? part of the church?"

"Yes, that is a wall of the church," he replied. "We will go and see it presently. Well, if you will have it."

And to please Gabrielle he began to make a rapid and skilful sketch of the picturesque corner, while she stood at his elbow and watched him. Suddenly she started, and a cry escaped her.

"What is the matter?" he asked, turning quickly to look at her.

"Oh, it is nothing," said Gabrielle; "only I thought we were alone, and there was a woman watching us."

"A woman!" he said, "where?"

Gabrielle pointed to the doorway which gave access to the next room. Theyn passed quickly into that room and on into the smaller room beyond. No one was there. Outside the windows was a terrace formed by the roof of a lower dwelling. He stepped on to this and looked about him. Below on either hand were little courts or gardens, overgrown with weeds and brambles, but no living creature was visible.

"You were mistaken," he said to Gabrielle, who had followed him and now stood within one of the windows—"there is no one here."

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altar still stood in its place, but the roof was utterly gone, and the blue heaven over-arched the desolate shrine.

"More than a hundred persons perished at this spot," said Theyn. "They rushed here for shelter, with a superstitious belief that they would be safe within the House of God, and the roof came down and killed them all."

"Oh, how sad! how terrible!" said Gabrielle with a shiver.

"Yes, their prayers did not help them then; their faith was vain," said Theyn.

"Don't say that," said Gabrielle, and her voice told him that he had given keen pain. "How do you know that their prayers did not help them? Surely, it was better for them to die trusting in God? Why God permits such calamities we cannot understand; it may be that they are not calamities as He sees them; but we know that He is love."

"You believe that?" he asked gently.

"Surely, surely, I believe it," she answered.

"And you believe in prayer?" he asked.

"My past life, with its mistakes and their punishment, has taught me to cling to the thought of God's love, and to know that He hears and answers prayer," replied Gabrielle. "You may deem my belief in prayer superstitious; but,

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indeed, I do not regard prayer as a talisman by which I may obtain what I desire. I believe that God loves us too well to grant every foolish petition we may present to Him. Yet sometimes I have had answers to my prayers that have frightened me."

Theyn looked at her with a puzzled air. He could not guess that she was recalling the hour when the answer to many prayers for succour and relief had seemed to come with the announcement of her husband's death.

"The thought that God is our Father helps me so much," said Gabrielle after a moment's pause. "You see, I was so happy in my own father; I trusted him so perfectly; I used to tell him everything, so that it is easy for me to believe that our Father in Heaven is pleased when His children confide to Him even the most foolish desires of their hearts, though, like our earthly parents, He may often show His love by withholding, as well as by giving, the heart's desire."

"I envy you your faith, Mrs. Grant," said Theyn. "I sincerely hope you may never lose it. But it is cold within these walls. Let us go into the sunshine."

The sun lay warm on the grass outside. Gabrielle seated herself on the low broken wall which bounded the precincts of the church, and Theyn

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stood beside her. She could seldom speak without emotion of the father she had so passionately loved, and she was still under the influence of the tender feeling thus awakened when Theyn said, "Mrs. Grant, I should like to tell you something of my past history."

She looked up at him with frank but pleased surprise. "Thank you," she said gently; "I shall be much interested in hearing it."

"It is not a nice story," he said; "but it will explain to you why I have lived such an isolated life here for so long, and avoided as much as possible my fellow country-people."

He paused. Apparently it was not easy to begin.

"I have never spoken of it to any one," he said, "since it all happened—or at least since my mother died."

"Oh! I saw her grave in the cemetery," said Gabrielle; "I knew that you must have had great sorrow. Please tell me all about it."

"My mother's death was a great grief to me," said Theyn; "but I—we had a worse trouble to bear. My lot in life has been to suffer not only sorrow but shame—though through no fault of mine."

"That is hard indeed," said Gabrielle. "Yet I think it is harder to feel shame of oneself and

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to suffer remorse for a mistake that can never be undone."

"God knows there has been enough of that too in my life," said Theyn; "but let me tell you my story."

He seated himself on the wall near Gabrielle as he spoke. His back was towards the ruined church. A woman, crouching beneath the broken wall, crept a little nearer as he moved, and concealed by a clump of nettles, watched with hateful eyes the two so absorbed in each other.

"My father was a London stockbroker," said Theyn; "his religious opinions were those of a Presbyterian. He was an elder of his church, if you know what that means, and a man esteemed for his piety and good works. I was his only child, and as my father was reputed to be very wealthy, I was regarded by my acquaintance as a fortunate fellow. My boyhood was passed at home; but I had the best education that London can afford, and in due time went to Cambridge. I won no special distinction at college, but I was not idle. My tastes were æsthetic rather than scholarly. I had no aptitude for business, and my father did not wish me to join him on the Stock Exchange. My mother would have liked me to be a clergyman; but such was not my vocation. Already

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my mind revolted from the stern and narrow creed held by my parents. I could not fail to see the contrast between the humility and unworldliness they professed to admire and my father's eager pursuit of wealth and the ostentatious luxury which prevailed in our home. I longed to follow the career of an artist; but both my parents refused to regard Art in the light of a serious profession. I might pursue it as an amateur, a *dilletante*; but they could not dissociate the idea of Bohemianism from the life of an artist, and to please them I had to choose what they considered a more dignified calling. I was reading for the Bar when the crash came which wrecked my life.

"There was never much sympathy between me and my father. I took no interest in the philanthropic and religious schemes to which he contributed so liberally, nor in the public meetings connected with the same at which he was wont to assist. I knew almost nothing of his business affairs, save that his name appeared in connection with various companies and that he was generally regarded as a man of high integrity and financial stability.

"And now—now, Mrs. Grant, if you were to ask some of the English you meet what they know of Alexander Theyn, they would probably

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tell you that his name is opprobrious as that of one of the most infamous scoundrels, one of the vilest hypocrites that this generation has known."

"Oh, surely you exaggerate," said Gabrielle quickly. "No one would say anything so bad as that; and if they did, it is not true."

"But it is," he said quietly. "It is—the truth. That is the bitter fact. For years my father led a double life. He served, or thought he served, God and mammon. He conducted his business on dishonest principles. The companies in which he was interested were more or less fraudulent. At last he overstepped the mark, and doom followed. A gigantic swindle, involving the ruin of widows and orphans and hundreds of honest humble folk who had trusted in my father's good name, made that name notorious throughout Great Britain. There was a long and terrible trial, causing me and my mother agonies of shame, and then he was condemned to ten years' imprisonment."

Theyn paused. He had spoken rapidly, his voice growing hoarse as he proceeded. Now he paused and wiped his brow. His face was pale, almost haggard. It had cost him much to lay bare the shameful facts of his history.

Gabrielle's heart was deeply moved. She

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the narrowness and loneliness of my life, Mrs. Grant, though I am deeply gratified for the friendship you offer me."

"But you have other friends," she said; "you must have many friends."

"Oh, yes, I have made friends here," he said, "but of the friends I had before my father's downfall not one remains to me. This, I confess, is in a measure my own fault. But I had one striking proof of the influence of adversity on human love."

"What was that?" asked Gabrielle.

"I was engaged to be married," he said. "The engagement had lasted but a few weeks when the blow fell. She was a well-brought-up young woman, religious, high-minded, devoted to good works, and when my father's crimes were made public she sent me back my ring. That was all."

A flush rose in Gabrielle's face. A variety of emotions might have been read there ere she said decisively, "She never loved you."

"Which shows her good sense," he said with a smile. "Well, I know now that I never loved her; but it hurt me at the time."

What was there in the words, or the way in which he said them, to cause Gabrielle such a sudden tremor? She leaned over the wall and looked into the wilderness below.

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Tell me all you feel that you can tell me. Is your father still living?"

Her words had lightened the gloom of Theyn's countenance. He held her hand in a closer pressure ere he let it go. Then he said, "He died at Dartmoor seven years ago. The rigours of prison life proved too severe for him. I never saw him after his trial."

"And you have lived at San Remo ever since?" she asked.

"Yes, except for two winters which I passed in Rome," he replied. "How could I go back to England? What career could there be for me there? I devoted myself to painting; but ambition was dead within me. Whatever I might produce, I knew that my name would brand me."

"Did you never think of changing your name?" asked Gabrielle. "You paint so beautifully that you have power to make a name for yourself."

"It is very good of you to say so," he replied with a smile; "but I can perhaps better estimate the quality of my work, and I have ceased to indulge in such dreams. I am content, or I was content, with my life. My mother left me a small income, which her father settled on her at her marriage. That, with what I make by my pictures, is more than enough for my needs. I had grown used to

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turned her eyes on him, his face was so white that she thought he cried out in pain.

"What is the matter? Are you hurt? Did it strike you?" she asked breathlessly.

"Oh, that is nothing," he answered; "but it might have killed you! The savagery of it! And to think that a woman should do such a thing!"

"But she did not mean to—it was surely an accident," said Gabrielle. "Oh, don't go—don't take any notice."

Theyn paid no heed to her words.

"Please stay here," he said. "Sit on that trunk till I come back." And he started to ascend the steep path, though the blow his foot had received made him limp painfully. Gabrielle remonstrated in vain. He disappeared from view. When several minutes had passed she followed him. As she reached the top of the path she saw him coming from the deserted church. He still looked pale and disturbed.

"Did you find her?" asked Gabrielle.

"Yes, I have seen her; she is mad," he replied, and something in his manner withheld Gabrielle from questioning him further.

Though he made light of his injury, Gabrielle could see as they turned homewards that every step gave Theyn pain. The way seemed long

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ere they reached the new town ai
hotel where Theyn had ordered
carriage stood at the door, whic
return to San Remo, and at Gabri
Theyn engaged this to take th
was inclined to hasten their depar
had fallen, which put an end to
the expedition.

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"Ah, yes," said Gabrielle with a little start, while the colour rose in her cheek. "Is it very bad?"

"He said not," replied the signora; "but he cannot walk. You knew that he had hurt it?"

"Yes," said Gabrielle. "When did you see him?"

"Last evening," replied the signora, "I called to ask his advice on a little matter of business, and I found him lying on a couch. He said he had hurt his foot and it was so swollen that he could not walk; but he did not tell me exactly how the accident occurred. Do you know?"

"A large stone fell on it," said Gabrielle hurriedly.

"How in the world did that happen?" asked the signora, "and where?"

"At Bussana, the old town where the earthquake was, you know," said Gabrielle. ignoring the former question.

"What made the stone fall?" asked the signora. "Was there an earthquake?"

"Oh, no," said Gabrielle, "there was no earthquake."

"How do you know?" asked the signora. "Were you there?"

Never had Gabrielle felt more annoyed by this

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woman's love of asking questions. She had sent a note to Signora Simonetti, excusing herself from taking a lesson on the morning of her expedition with Theyn, but had not thought it necessary to explain why she wished to have a holiday. She did not choose to reply now, and her dignified silence would have been felt by most women as a reproof; but the signora only smiled significantly when Gabrielle's back was turned to her as she crossed the room to open the door for Lupo, whose beseeching bark was heard from the other side.

"What are you going to do to-day, signora?" the Italian teacher presently inquired.

"Really I have not thought of doing anything in particular," said Gabrielle. "I daresay I shall take a walk with Marcella by-and-by."

"Ah! I suppose you are very fond of walking," said the signora. "Most Englishwomen are—indeed it frightens me to think of the long walks some of them take."

"I never walk far with Marcella," said Gabrielle. "She is so stout that she cannot ascend a hill without suffering, and even walking on the level soon tires her."

"I sympathize with Marcella," said Signora Simonetti; "I hate walking. I would never endure the fatigue if I could afford to take a

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carriage. As it is, however, I seldom have the pleasure of a drive."

Gabrielle looked at her as she spoke, and was struck with the worn, wan look of her face. She appeared so weak and ill-nourished that it was easy to believe that she could not enjoy exercise of any kind. Gabrielle's heart smote her because she did not feel more kindly towards this melancholy-looking woman, and with a sudden, generous impulse she said: "Are you fond of driving? Would you care to take a drive with me this afternoon?"

"Indeed, I should like it exceedingly," said the signora with alacrity; "but you were not thinking of driving this afternoon."

"It is true the thought has but just occurred to me," said Gabrielle; "but I am sure it is a happy one, and if you, who know the neighbourhood so well, would accompany me and show me one of the prettiest drives, I should be really grateful to you."

"It is too kind of you to put it in that way," said the signora. "You know well that you are conferring on me a great pleasure. Can I assist you by ordering the carriage as I go home?"

"If you would do so I should be much obliged," said Gabrielle. "You will know where to find an easy carriage and a good horse."

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"I will engage the man whom the Signor Inglese always employs when he needs a carriage," said Signora Simonetti.

Gabrielle made no comment but simply named the hour at which she thought they had better start.

After her teacher had gone Gabrielle stood for some minutes at the window, looking across the garden, yet scarce aware of the things on which her eyes rested, for her mind was absorbed by an inward vision of Theyn, lying disabled on his couch. How was it with him? Did he fume and fret under the irksome restraint, or did he calmly acquiesce in the inevitable and occupy himself with drawing or with books? She could not imagine him acting otherwise than as a brave, strong, sensible man should. He would not show a petty mind under any circumstances.

No doubt his servant understood him perfectly, and could do all that he required, yet it seemed to Gabrielle that he must feel the lack of a woman's thought and care. She remembered how, when she was little more than a child, her father had met with an accident which had confined him to the sofa for a fortnight, and the pleasure she had found in waiting upon him and amusing him. He had taught her to play chess, and many a good game they had had together

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later. She had never played a game of chess after she married. Abel Grant had cared for but one game—the game of money-making. She wondered if Theyn played chess. She felt an eager desire to show herself his friend indeed. She desired above all things to be near him, to see his studio again, to know what he was doing, to talk with him about his work. She knew that she could make him more comfortable and cheer the tedium of his confinement. Why could she not do this, if indeed they were friends? What was the strong yet intangible barrier that withheld her?

"I could take Marcella with me," she said to herself; yet she knew that she could not go. "It is because of what Mrs. Hobbs said," she told herself while the blood burned in her cheeks. "It is because I know how she and like-minded women would judge me that I cannot obey the dictates of my heart." Yet why could she not dispose of these considerations as she had disposed of the question of mourning? The answer lay deep in the innermost consciousness of her womanhood, which she shrank from exploring.

Then a thought struck her. Since she could not go herself, she would send Marcella to him. She went at once into the adjoining room where

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Marcella sat at her needlework. The maid looked up from the stocking she was mending and surveyed her mistress with her large, calm eyes. She read an eager purpose in her mistress' countenance, though Gabrielle opened one of her drawers and turned over its contents rather aimlessly ere she spoke: "I am going to take Signora Simonetti for a drive this afternoon, Marcella."

"Are you?" said Marcella; "then I guess she'll enjoy it. I don't calculate she gets many drives."

"I am afraid she does not," replied Gabrielle; "nor as much fresh air as she needs, poor thing! I have been thinking that perhaps you might——" She stopped, hesitated and began again: "Did I tell you, Marcella, that Mr. Theyn had met with an accident?"

"You did not, madam," said Marcella; "I should not have forgotten it if you had."

"Oh, well, it did not seem much at first," said Gabrielle nervously. "A stone fell on his foot when we were at Bussana. Signora Simonetti saw him yesterday, and she says that his foot has swollen dreadfully, and he cannot walk. I was wondering whether he knows what to do for it. Men are often so helpless when anything happens to them. Would you mind going to see what you

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can do for him ? You are so cleve
all kinds of ailments."

"Maybe I do know something
ing," said Marcella with a curious
I know too that men are cantanke
when they've anything the matt
and as like as not he'd be mad wit
fering. Besides, Mr. Theyn app
managed for himself long enough t
a few things, and he has his own
on him."

"Of course I did not mean that
and say you had come to look a
Gabrielle. "There is a book I p
him, which you might take with
me. You might ask to see him, a
say you could manage to find o
the matter with his foot."

"If I saw it with my own eyes
know what to do for it," said Ma
likely as not he's got a doctor i
this time. If a man's finger ache
going to die, and sends for the d
take the book, and if it's possibl
of him, I'll do my best."

"Thank you," said Gabrielle
we ought to do what we can fo
laid aside, since he has done so m

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Marcella made no reply as she ran her needle through the stocking with deliberate care.

Punctually to the hour Gabrielle had named appeared the carriage and Signora Simonetti. The signora had made some pitiful attempts to smarten her attire, and seemed in the best of spirits. Gabrielle took her seat without inquiring whither they were going, and Signora Simonetti, chatting volubly about everything they saw, gave no information as to their route. Driving through the town, they turned into a pleasant, well-made road which gradually zig-zagged up the hill. They passed charming houses, surrounded by fine trees which threw their shade across the road, while pink geraniums grew profusely on the garden walls and roses trailed their branches over, and many a fair blossom showed just above the reach of the wayfarer. Presently the houses ceased and cypresses rose high on either side of the road. Between the trees Gabrielle caught beautiful views of the bay and the old town with its picturesque houses rising one above another, their topmost stories wreathed with vines, the brilliant autumnal hues of the leaves giving an exquisite touch of colour to the scene. Still the road wound upward. Now they were looking down into a stony gorge through which a mountain stream impetuously took its

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way. On either side were vine
ruddy leaves, contrasting vividly
olives that closed in upon them.
of the road new beauty came
ascended, growing rougher and
horses toiled on.

"Oh, what a lovely road this
Gabrielle. "You have chosen a
indeed, signora."

"I am glad it pleases you,
Simonetti. "You do not ask i
we are going."

"No," said Gabrielle, "I am
things as they come. We are o
siderable height above San Ren

"You see that white buildin
right of the pine wood?" said th
is the monastery of San Romolo

"San Romolo!" exclaimed
"Are we going there?"

"That is impossible," said th
it can only be approached by a
this road will take us within a co
distance of San Romolo. We s
us, and if you cared to alight
steps, I could take you to a
would get a superb view."

"I should like that very m

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Gabrielle, consulting her watch. "We have time, I think, to do it, and get back before dark."

"Oh, yes," said the signora; "the way back, being all down hill, will not take long."

The horses quickened their pace along a level stretch of road shaded by groves of grey-green rustling olives. The voices of the contadini labouring amongst them made themselves heard. Children were playing about the knotted serpentine roots of the old trees. Then the road ascended once more. Mountain slopes clothed with pines came into view. At a word from the signora, the driver checked his horses.

"Now, Mrs. Grant," said her guide, "if you will come a little way across country with me, I will show you a prospect which I think you will say is worth taking a little trouble to see."

"With pleasure," said Gabrielle, descending quickly from the carriage, followed by the signora, who led the way along a little track which wound with many a twist and turn through the olive wood, till it reached the summit of a rocky knoll, crowned by three tall cypresses. A cry of delight broke from Gabrielle as she stood beside the trees. Below, spread out like a map, lay a prospect of surpassing richness. The eye might wander over the whole of the green, undulating country, embracing with its arms the broad blue bay.

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Valleys clothed with silvery olives, vineyards, plantations of flowers and fruit at the lowest level; then, rising upward, tufts of stone pines, with their dark umbrella tops towering above the other foliage. High up to the right were the houses and the monastery of San Romolo.

Gabrielle had no words to express her delight at this vision of what seemed veritably an earthly Paradise.

"Is it not beautiful?" said the signora; "I knew it would please you. But will you come a few steps farther? I want to show you something else."

"Wherever you please," said Gabrielle, a little astonished at the energy with which the signora, who hated walking, pushed her way through the coarse grass and weeds, taking a short cut to another point of view. They turned the side of the hill and looked down on a cottage standing in its shelter. It was a small square building with red-tiled roof, and walls of a pinken hue. Two tall cypresses stood before the gabled front. Vines covered a trellis at the back; apple-trees showed a wealth of rosy fruit, while flowers grew everywhere.

"What do you think of that?" asked the signora; "is it not a dear little place?"

Gabrielle murmured an assent. She had an

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intuition of what was coming, and was hardly surprised when her companion said: "It is the Casa Rossa of the Signor Inglese. I thought you would like to see it."

The colour rushed into Gabrielle's face. She felt a sharp sense of annoyance, even while her eyes took in eagerly every detail of the scene below. She would not have chosen to see Basil Theyn's house in this way. It would detract from the pleasure of her first visit to it with him. She was angry with the signora for bringing her there without her knowledge. Then, while her eyes still rested on the green enclosure, a woman came from beneath the trellis, brilliant with red and yellow leaves, and walked across the garden. She was a tall, finely-formed woman, who wore the gala dress of a contadina. Something red fluttered on her head, above her masses of rich black hair, and was held in place by large gilt pins. Her well-poised form moved with easy grace amid the flowers. Gabrielle knew that she was handsome, though at that distance it was impossible to see clearly her features. Behind her ran a pretty little dog of the Lupetti breed.

A sudden sharp pain clutched Gabrielle's heart. It was accompanied by a sickening, suffocating sensation of physical distress.

"Who is that?" she asked hoarsely.

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mental stimulant, for the Italian words came with remarkable readiness to her lips. She questioned the signora; she questioned the driver. Her thirst for information respecting things Italian was insatiable. She scarcely paused for a minute till the carriage drew up at the gate of the Villa Buonsoggiorno; yet her manner did not deceive Signora Simonetti; nor could Gabrielle for one moment forget the picture that had photographed itself upon her mind. She arranged that the carriage should take the signora to the house where she lived, and bade her good-bye with apparent cheerfulness. Yet Marcella, meeting her mistress as she entered the house, knew at once that something was wrong.

"We have had a very pleasant drive; the road was charming; I have enjoyed it so much," said Gabrielle deliberately, as with delicate care she drew off her gloves.

"Mr. Theyn sent his compliments, madam, and he is exceedingly obliged to you for the book," said Marcella. "His foot is less swollen than it was yesterday; but it looks very bad, and he certainly ought to rest it for some days, for it would be very serious if the skin were to break. It must have been an awfully heavy stone, though he says his foot did not receive the full weight of it."

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A shiver ran through Gabrielle's frame. She saw again the woman's dark face with its fierce, gleaming eyes. Could it be that she was—Maddalena ?

"His servant has been attending to it pretty well—for a man," said Marcella, wondering that her mistress made no response to her words. "I advised Mr. Theyn to apply Listerine, and he says he will do so. But I will get you some tea, madam."

Gabrielle was caressing Lupo in a mechanical manner which did not deceive that sagacious animal. She raised herself and said in tones that sounded strange to her faithful maid : "I want no tea, thank you, Marcella. My head aches from driving so long, and I am going to lie down for a while."

With that she went into her bedroom and closed the door. Then Marcella felt sure that something was very wrong, and, womanlike, laid all the blame upon Signora Simonetti.

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CHAPTER XI

A TRANSITION

When she had locked her door, Gabrielle's arms fell to her side and she stood motionless for some seconds, staring blankly before her. Her eyes were still filled with the vision which had wrought within her such an agonizing revulsion of feeling. She saw the tall, graceful form, the head so proudly carried with its crown of raven black hair, half-veiled by the fluttering scarlet kerchief. She needed no nearer view, for Theyn's pictures had shown her that the woman was superbly handsome with the flashing dark eyes and warm colour which render Southern beauty so fascinating. And this woman she had seen moving, with the air of one at home, in the garden of the house belonging to Basil Theyn!

The innuendoes of Signora Simonetti had been hardly needed to make Gabrielle grasp the situation as that lady intended that she should. She

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was no inexperienced girl. Though her husband had been cruel to her, he had not done her the worst wrong a man can inflict on his wife; yet her ten years of married life had brought her knowledge of the world and certain repulsive phases of the life of men. Her heart cried out with fierce indignation against Theyn because he was not the man she had imagined him to be. She told herself that she hated him, even while the keen torture of jealousy made her aware how completely he had won her heart. She had not known jealousy before, because she had not known love.

And now the sharp, cruel pain came accompanied by scathing contempt—contempt both for herself and for him. That she should have given her heart so utterly to one of whom she knew so little! That she should have imagined him so much nobler and better than other men, and have suffered him to become such a potent influence in her life that her existence seemed to shrivel and darken when she thought of living on without this love that had come unbidden to her heart! Yet even while she reproached herself, she felt that there was an inevitableness about it that freed her from blame.

Gabrielle roused herself and began to put off her walking dress. If only she could as easily

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have laid aside the burden of her wounded heart! She lashed her pride that it might spurn the idea of love. Now she knew the kind of man Theyn was, she would not suffer him to destroy her peace of mind. She wanted no more of his friendship. She remembered with a throb of painful shame that he had never spoken or hinted at aught but friendship between them. Her face burned as she reflected that she, who had repudiated the thought of a second marriage, had given her heart to this man unsought. How had she been so beguiled? Was it a judgment on her for her callousness when she heard of her husband's death? Ah! truly she knew now what it was to be widowed!

With the thought anger and scorn suddenly dissolved in grief, and she threw herself face downward on the bed, sobbing in utter hopeless abandonment. She loved this man with all her soul; and life was dark, hopeless, and impossible because he was unworthy.

"I cannot bear it! I cannot go on living," she cried aloud. Wild notions, born of maddening despair, flitted before her mind. She counted her years and found them too few; she looked into the vista of the future and found it far too long. She recalled the accident that had cut short the life of Abel Grant and longed that some such fate

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might befall her. Did death ever come to those who yearned for its approach?

Her little dog came to the door of her room and whimpered and whined for admission; but she hardened her heart against him. He was Theyn's gift, a factor in the delusion which had led her into such hopeless anguish. When she heard Marcella's step on the stairs, she rose and fastened the door which led from her room into that of her maid. Marcella was in despair at the thought of her mistress fasting for so many hours; but had to be satisfied with her assurances that she needed only rest, and desired to be left alone.

Distressed by the brief, faint answers that came to her from behind the closed door, it was long ere Marcella could sleep that night; but her mistress was more wakeful. Through all the long hours she never lost consciousness.

In the early morning an idea came to her. She must go away. She could not meet Theyn again. She must depart before his foot was sufficiently recovered to allow of his leaving the house. The question followed—"Where should she go?"

No other resort along that sunny coast would do. She must go to a distance. The thought of blue skies and buoyant sunlit seas and radiant sunsets had grown distasteful to her, for all these things were associated with Theyn. She must get

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far from all that would remind her of the past few weeks, so perilously sweet and delusive. England was the place. The foggy, gloomy clime, where winter banishes the sun and holds the earth in a hard grip, seemed congenial to her now.

Gabrielle felt ill when she rose, and Marcella was shocked to see her white, haggard face, though she had the wisdom not to remark upon her mistress' changed appearance. But her bath and the cup of tea Marcella brought her gave her energy, and she made her toilette with tremulous haste.

"Not that dress, Marcella," she said when her maid took out a grey gown; "I will wear black to-day."

Marcella made no comment, but she wondered as she helped Gabrielle to array herself in a gown of unrelieved black, which accentuated the wanness of her looks. She had still more cause to marvel a little later when Gabrielle announced her intention of starting for London on the following day.

In vain Marcella ventured to remonstrate, urging that her mistress was hardly fit to undertake a journey. Gabrielle was not in a mood to be checked. Intimate as were her relations with her maid, Gabrielle never allowed their positions to become reversed, and Marcella was made to

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know, on this occasion, that her duty was to obey.

Gabrielle's mind was swayed by a strong desire to get as far from Theyn as possible. It would be a relief to know that the sea lay between them. In England she might begin to be herself again, it seemed to her, to possess her own soul once more, to be free of this pain which was like a cruel constraint, fettering the spirit which so short a time before had been rejoicing in its freedom.

Gabrielle gave her orders with decision and energy. There was a great deal to be done ere they could quit the villa. As she hardly expected that she would return to dwell there again, it was necessary to leave things in such a way that her possessions could easily be forwarded to her when her term of occupancy was ended. In spite of her sleepless night, Gabrielle's mind was strangely alert. She was more quick to plan than Marcella, and overlooked no detail. She worked with untiring energy, and by an early hour of the afternoon the trunks were packed and everything in order for their departure.

Lupo had been running to and fro, and watching their preparations with uneasy eyes. Gabrielle pushed him aside when he fawned on her. The faithful creature, missing her caresses, and dimly

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aware that something was wrong, grew more and more unhappy, yet lost no opportunity of manifesting his affection for his mistress. At last Gabrielle's heart smote her for her unkindness to him. What had he done that she should vent on him the bitterness of her spirit? She sank into a chair, and taking Lupo in her arms; laid his soft head against her cheek. Some tears fell on his little black nose. He turned and licked her cheek with eager affection.

"Marcella," said Gabrielle after a minute, "what shall I do with Lupo? We cannot take him with us. He would be an impossible travelling companion. Besides, I remember hearing, when we were at the hotel, that no one is permitted to take a dog into England just now."

"No, we cannot take him," said Marcella. "Would you——" She paused. She had been about to say, "Would you ask Mr. Theyn to take care of him?" but some instinct withheld her from uttering his name. She said instead, "Would it do to leave him here with Antonio?"

"No," said Gabrielle, "poor Lupo would fret sorely if he were left alone in this house. I wonder if Signora Simonetti would take care of him for me."

She named the lady with reluctance. The very

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thought of Signora Simonetti was painful to her, recalling as it did the sharp cruel agony of the hour which had brought her such enlightenment.

"She would be glad to do so, I should think," said Marcella; "your going away will make a difference to her."

"I am afraid it will," replied Gabrielle. "I wonder if I dare say to her that the care of Lupo would be held equivalent to giving me lessons, and remunerated at the same rate. I think I will write a little note and get you to take it to her. You can call at Cook's office as you come back, and find out all about the journey and take our tickets."

"And you will rest while I am gone," pleaded Marcella. "If you do not you will be quite unfit to travel to-morrow."

"Yes, yes, I will rest," Gabrielle replied, feeling the while as if rest were an impossibility for her.

The note was written with great difficulty, for Gabrielle's head seemed to have lost the power of thought, and the fitting Italian words would not come at her bidding. But it was done at last in a fashion, and then Gabrielle yielded to Marcella's persuasions and lay down on a couch, suffering her maid to tuck her up in a rug and arrange the

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She wandered down the path and entered the arbour. The roses which hung about it were turning brown; their leaves were withering. Just so had withered the hopes of joy and peace with which she had taken possession of this little home. How she had rejoiced in its prettiness and seclusion, and now her one desire was to flee far from it!

She entered the arbour and seated herself beneath its shelter. No one could see her, but from beneath the overhanging boughs she could look down into the road and mark all who passed along the esplanade. Apathetically she watched the passers-by, catching sight of some familiar forms, but viewing all with indifference. Mrs. Hobbs and Mrs. Barker went by, absorbed in earnest talk. A curious smile passed over Gabrielle's face as she wondered whether they were discussing her, magnifying her mistakes, or enlarging upon her folly. Truly it had been great, and great too was the suffering it had brought her. These women could little imagine the heart-sick, despairful creature she had become.

Then she leaned her elbows on the little table before her and hid her face in her hands. It seemed a relief to shut out everything from her sight, and she remained thus for some moments. A step close at hand on the gravel startled her.

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She looked up and saw some one approaching the arbour, some one who leaned on a stick and limped as he walked. As she saw him the last vestige of colour left Gabrielle's face and her heart grew sick within her. A mist seemed to float before her eyes and she trembled from head to foot.

"Gabrielle," said the one who came, "what is the matter? You look ill. *Are* you ill?"

He had never called her Gabrielle before, and he was scarcely aware now that the name had passed his lips. Ever since he had learned what her name was he had called her so in his heart.

She could not answer. Her heart was beating like a hammer. He saw her lips tremble, but no word passed them. His alarm increased.

"For mercy's sake tell me what has happened?" he cried. "Let me know what the trouble is. They tell me at the house that you are going away, that you start to-morrow morning. I cannot understand it."

"It is true," said Gabrielle, finding her voice at last; "I am going away."

"But why?" he asked. "What has brought you to this sudden resolve? You have called me your friend; will you not give me your confidence respecting this?"

"I cannot tell you," said Gabrielle. He looked

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at her in amazement. Her voice and manner were so utterly different from her usual bearing. She had not merely the air of one in distress. The cold constraint with which she spoke, and her averted glances, forced on him the conviction that he had in some way offended her.

"Gabrielle," he said, "are you angry with me?"

She made no reply. He came a little nearer to her, trying hard to meet the gaze she so carefully averted.

"I believe you are," he said; "but what can have come between us since we spent that morning at Bussana three days ago? Yesterday your maid came to me, bringing me a book and a kind message. You surely were not angry with me then?"

Still she kept silence. He saw that her slight form was swayed by the emotion she strove to repress.

"Your maid told me that you had gone for a drive with Signora Simonetti. Has she anything to do with your change of feeling towards me?"

As he spoke an idea struck him. He stepped quickly forward under its impulse; then, recalled to himself by the sharp pain in his foot, he sank on to a chair opposite to Gabrielle and confronted her, leaning across the little table.

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"In what direction did you drive yesterday afternoon?"

The question was spoken in a way which compelled her to reply.

"Towards San Romolo."

"Ah!" The colour suddenly surged up in his face. Gabrielle's eyes were still turned from him. She was nervously plucking the petals from a dead rose.

"You saw my little house perhaps. It is not far from the carriage road. Did not Signora Simonetti point it out to you?"

It was now Gabrielle who flushed deeply.

"She did," she answered very low.

"From the side of the hill one can look into the garden," he continued. "You may have seen also—Maddalena?"

Gabrielle's face grew crimson. She turned quickly and her eyes, almost black in their brilliance, flashed into his as she said, scarce above a whisper, "Yes, I saw her."

"You did not know that she lives there—with her mother," he said quietly. "Monna Teresina keeps house for me. She is an excellent cook and understands also the care of the garden and the vines. She is responsible for everything in my absence."

His eyes were studying Gabrielle's countenance,

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and he detected signs of the change which his words instantly wrought within her.

"Lives there with her mother." The words lifted in a moment the heavy weight from her heart. For a daughter to live with her mother, who kept house for a gentleman, seemed a very natural arrangement. What harm could there be in that?

"Then she is your servant, I suppose?" she said, almost involuntarily.

"I am afraid Maddalena would hardly like to hear herself so described," he said lightly; "but she is certainly my model. She is supposed to help her mother in various ways; but I fear she is rather an indolent person."

Gabrielle drew a deep breath of relief. New life seemed to be pulsing through her heart and throbbing in her veins. Then there came to her a shamed consciousness of self-betrayal. She half rose, but sank back in her chair as Theyn's hand clasped hers.

"Gabrielle," he said in tones that thrilled her with their passion and tenderness, "my darling, I cannot keep silence; I cannot let you go away from me. Have you not divined that you are the one woman in the world for me? Don't you feel that we belong to each other?"

The hand he held trembled within his own.

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He drew his chair close to hers and put his arm about her.

"Am I mad to hope that your heart responds to mine? Can you love me, Gabrielle? Can you trust me? Dare you give your life into my keeping?"

The answer, scarce above a whisper, thrilled him with joy.

"It is yours. I am all yours."

He folded her to his heart. Their lips met.

"Now I know what it is to be happy," said Gabrielle after a while; "now at last I really live."

"And I," he said. "We were made for each other. You shall be happy now. My love will strive to make amends to you for what you have suffered in the past. You shall never regret your trust in me."

"As if I could," she responded with a smile, her sweet eyes shining with love and confidence as they looked into his. "Forgive me that I ever doubted you. I shall not again. I shall always know that you are good and true."

Her head was on his breast and she could not see the flush of shame which mounted to his brow. Her words had dealt a stab to the conscience of the man who loved her with a love as intense as her own.

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That night Gabrielle took from her finger the wedding ring Abel Grant had given her, and locked it away out of sight.

"When we are married," she said to herself with a glow of blissful emotion, "I will throw it into the sea."

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CHAPTER XII

DEVELOPMENTS

MARCELLA returned from her errand to find everything changed. Cook's tickets were no longer needed; the trunks must be unpacked and the house restored to its former condition. Gabrielle had changed her mind. The journey to England was postponed. All would be as it was.

Yet Marcella knew at once that everything would be different. The sudden turn of affairs was bewildering; yet she was clear-sighted enough to see what it meant. Gabrielle's countenance, lately so shadowed, now radiant with the most exquisite joy, told its own story. Marcella divined that Basil Theyn had wrought the change before she learned that he was in the house. Judging from the condition of his foot on the previous day, she would have thought it impossible for him to walk even a few steps;

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but a force which can conquer physical weakness had brought him to Gabrielle.

Marcella's heart sank within her as she realized what had come to pass. It was strange that she could not rejoice when she saw her dear lady so happy; but though she took herself to task for foreboding evil, she could not shake off her anxiety. Love had come to Gabrielle as she had hoped and prayed that it might; but the manner of its coming did not satisfy Marcella. She was not sure of Basil Theyn.

"He seems a pleasant enough man," she said to herself; "but what do we really know of him? Oh! if he does not love her as she deserves to be loved; if he has come into her life to bring more pain to one who has already suffered so much, may God's curse rest upon him!"

Marcella did not feel this vehement aspiration to be wrong. Her religion comprised a belief in the punishment no less than in the forgiveness of sins.

It was plain that no shadow of misgiving rested on Gabrielle's heart.

"I am so happy, Marcella, so perfectly happy," she said that night as she confided to her maid, as she brushed her hair, that she had promised to marry Basil Theyn. "I have found the love

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that makes a woman's life full and complete and harmonious. If only I could blot out all the past!"

"If this is God's will for you," said Marcella slowly, "then He has blotted out the past, and you must forget the things that are behind."

"Why do you say 'if,' Marcella?" asked Gabrielle. "Surely I cannot doubt that this is God's will for me? I take my great happiness as from His hands, and give Him heartfelt thanks."

"God grant you are not mistaken, madam," said Marcella. "With all my heart I pray that you may be happy."

"That prayer is answered already," said Gabrielle. "Oh, it is wonderful how things have come about! I feel that it was God's hand that guided me to this place. Do you remember how angry I was with you that day when you suggested that I might marry again?"

"Certainly I remember it," said Marcella; "it is not so very long ago. This has come about so swiftly. It is that which frightens me."

"Frightens you! Are you frightened, Marcella?" said Gabrielle, turning her head that she might look into her maid's face. "Why, really, you do not look pleased. You are not jealous, are you?"

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"No, I am not jealous," said Marcella bluntly, "but I'd like to be sure that he is good enough for you."

"Then you may be," said Gabrielle emphatically; "he is indeed far too good for me. It is I who am not worthy to be loved by him."

Marcella made a murmur of dissent.

"It is of no use your saying anything," exclaimed Gabrielle with a happy laugh, "for you cannot possibly understand *how* happy I am and how utterly I trust him. There is only one thing that troubles me—and that does not trouble me much. When I think how short the time is—only six weeks since we heard of—the accident — I am sorry because I know how heartless people will deem me. But you, who know all the truth, will not judge me heartless."

"I should hope not," said Marcella; "you know that I have always said that you have too much heart."

"Ah! not now," cried Gabrielle; "my heart is just brimming over with all the love and joy and thankfulness which fills it. I shall not sleep to-night for happiness; and last night——"

She checked herself.

"Last night," said Marcella, "you were wakeful from another cause. I'm reminded of the

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text which says—"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

And fervently she hoped that it might be the grief and not the joy that had come in as a sojourner.

Theyn's foot recovered rapidly in the days which followed, during which he and Gabrielle were frequently together. There was not the faintest spice of coquetry in Gabrielle's nature. She did not play with her lover, or make experiments as to her power over him. She was proud of the love which had come to complete her life, and looked forward gladly to the future which seemed to stretch before her, bathed in golden light. Yet she was startled when Theyn spoke of an early marriage.

"Let us begin our life together with the New Year," he said. "Now, do not look so astonished, my darling—why should we not?"

Gabrielle was more than astonished; she was frightened at the suggestion. It shocked her to think of her second marriage following so soon upon the dissolution of her first. To take such a step would be to set at defiance every notion of womanly decorum. A widow who married after barely three months of widowhood! What would people say of her? She had not supposed that the wedding could take

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place till a year had elapsed s
death.

"Oh, no! no!" she exclair
hardly three weeks to the end c
is quite impossible."

"Why is it impossible?"
"You do not need to make
clothes or preparations of that
impossible?"

The colour rose in Gabrielle's
must know why I say so," she

"Surely you are not afraid o
he returned. "*You*, who have
brave and independent; you, w
dress *thus*!" And he touched
white silk blouse.

"Ah! but it was because I
one here knew, and it did n
Gabrielle. "I am not so very

"What does it matter what
he asked. "They will know
given me your love, for it will
long to conceal our engagemen
ence will it make in their opin
wed soon or late? But it w
difference to me, Gabrielle. W
of me?"

"I do think of you, Basil,

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"It is for your sake as much as for my own that I shrink from it. I do not want you to have a wife of whom people can say horrid things."

"They will not dare to say them to me," replied Theyn; "and we cannot hope to stop people's tongues. I care not what they say, except that I do not wish you to be pained. I will take you away from here. We will spend the rest of the winter in Rome, if you like. Or we might go farther south—what would you say to our wintering in Sicily?"

"I don't mind where it is," said Gabrielle; "I mean I should be happy anywhere—with you. Sicily would be delightful, of course, but——"

"Darling, I will not listen to a *but*," he broke in, stopping her lips with a kiss. "There can be no good reason why we should delay to join our lives when we belong to each other in heart and soul. It is surely no consideration for—*his* memory that makes you hesitate."

Gabrielle's colour deepened. There was indeed in her mind the thought that she owed some respect to the man whose name she had borne and whose wealth she had inherited. Would not the haste to which Theyn urged her add a deeper shade to the shame of her earlier marriage? Would it not make it visible to the eyes of her

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world as the sordid thing it had been
soon gave up Abel Grant's name, she
to renounce his wealth also.

"From what you have told me o
life, it seems to me that you need
thought of *him* influence you," contin
"I think you have kept nothing fro

"I have told you all I *could* tell you,
replied. "I want you to understand
about me, just as I desire to know
about your previous history. Hav
me all there is to tell about yourself

Her eyes were on his face as she
she was surprised to see him flush
pression change even while his gaze s
own.

"What do you mean?" he as
"Do you doubt me, Gabrielle?"

"How can you ask such a quest
her quick response, while her gray ey
and glowed. "You know it is no l
in you that makes me long to know
thing that has ever happened to y

"I am glad you say 'little thing
plied, "for there was never anything
me except my misfortunes. No on
a hero of me but my mother."

"That is not exactly the truth," s

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smiling; "but I will let it pass. At any rate, you are a great painter. Now please tell me about your mother. I wish I had known her."

So he talked to her for a while about his mother, and Gabrielle listened with an unfeigned interest. But presently he was again urging her to consent to an early union. Gabrielle would give no promise; but she felt that she was wavering. After all, what did it matter how people judged her? She need not mind if he did not, who was now all the world to her. Her one desire was to devote her life to the man who so needed her love.

The afternoon was not over when Theyn rose to depart. Gabrielle protested against his going so soon.

"Did I not tell you," he said, "that I have to go to Bordighera by the five o'clock train? I dine with a wealthy Canadian there, a patron of mine in former years, who has telegraphed to me that he is once more at the *Hotel Angst*, and wants to see me. I hope I may bring him back with me to-morrow to see my pictures. I shall have to stay the night at Bordighera, because there is no train by which I can return."

"Must you be away so long?" said Gabrielle; "I don't like the thought of it. Even if I do not see you, it is good to know you are near.

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Why could not your Canadian frie
San Remo ? "

"Because he has the bad tast
Bordighera, I suppose," said They
tell you what—I can drive back from
Shall I do so ? "

"Oh no," she said quickly; "I
have you take that long cold drive a
to gratify a whim of mine. But do
as soon as you conveniently can.
you to-morrow afternoon ? "

"All being well, you will," he re
I hope that by that time you will h
to put an end to our partings wh
Year dawns."

Gabrielle blushed and shook her hea
count on it," she warned him; yet
foresaw herself yielding to his wish.

They were saying "good-bye" i
longed fashion peculiar to lovers, wh
aware of the approach of a visit
hand was on the door as it was open
other side, and a servant appeared u
the room Mrs. Washington Hobbs.

Theyn cast a swift glance of com
at Gabrielle. Her smile was reas
was too happy to be afraid of Mrs.
Hobbs.

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As he bowed and stood aside to let the lady pass, Theyn's eyes again sought Gabrielle's. Would she rather that he stayed? She slightly shook her head in answer to his mute appeal, and he went.

The ample form of Mrs. Washington Hobbs seemed to fill the little room as she advanced to greet Gabrielle. She was flushed and breathing rapidly, and it struck Gabrielle that there was something aggressive in the rustle of her sombre crape-trimmed gown and the sweep of her long veil.

"My dear Gabrielle!" she ejaculated as she bestowed a kiss, first on Gabrielle's right and then on her left cheek, after the foreign fashion she had adopted; "My dear Gabrielle!"

"How are you, Mrs. Hobbs?" said Gabrielle. "You look tired. Don't sit there; take this seat, it is more comfortable."

"Oh, my dear! any seat will do for me," said Mrs. Hobbs, sinking heavily into the proffered chair; "I am far from well to-day, but I felt obliged to come to you. I felt it was my duty, for your mother's sake; and I am never one to shirk my duty."

"I am sure you are not," said Gabrielle.

"I reminded myself that you were a motherless girl," continued Mrs. Hobbs; "a motherless

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young widow, I should say, and in a most perilous position; and I should be wrong indeed if I did not warn you."

"Really!" said Gabrielle, elevating her brows. "I cannot think what you mean. I am aware of no danger that threatens me. On the contrary, I congratulate myself on the happiness of my present circumstances."

"When I heard what people were saying," Mrs. Hobbs went on, without heeding Gabrielle's remarks, "I felt it behoved me to keep silence no longer. I must deliver my soul, even if my words angered you. So I came, and to think" —here she cleverly simulated a shudder—"that I should find that man here!"

The colour flew into Gabrielle's face, and her eyes flashed.

"Excuse me, Mrs. Hobbs," she said quickly, "I cannot let you go farther without telling you that you are speaking of one who is my dearest friend. I did not mean to announce it yet, but to you, as my mother's friend, I will confide that I have promised to marry Mr. Theyn."

A cry of horror broke from Mrs. Hobbs.

"To marry him! marry *him*!" she exclaimed, lifting her hands with a tragic air. "Oh, my poor, unhappy girl, how can you have been so beguiled? Do you not know that he is a most

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immoral man? Has no one told you that he has a house at San Romolo, and a wife there who is no wife? And you would marry him when your husband is not three months dead!"

Gabrielle had grown very white as she listened, and an angry light had come into her eyes. The very intensity of her indignation made her manner appear almost calm as she said in low, emphatic tones—"You are uttering a wicked scandal, Mrs. Hobbs. There is not a word of truth in what you say. You ought to be ashamed to repeat such a story."

"I am never ashamed to say what is true," retorted Mrs. Hobbs, "and the truth it is, my dear Gabrielle, though I can well believe it is not acceptable to you."

"It is *not* true," said Gabrielle, raising her tones. "I will not listen to such words from you or from any one. You must either apologize for what you have said, or you must go away."

"I cannot apologize for saying what I know to be true," replied Mrs. Hobbs, compressing her lips into their most obstinate expression. "I can easily believe that dust has been thrown into your eyes; but you will find that I am not mistaken. I only hope that my warning has not come too late."

"Your *warning*, as you call it, is simply an

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absurdity," said Gabrielle in ton
with scorn, "since it is found
misconception of certain facts.
ing one of the best and noble
whose love I am proud to h
Hobbs, I cannot listen to mor
kind. I must ask you to go."

"Certainly, Gabrielle; I will
society upon you," said Mrs. H
shaking out her voluminous s
spoken in kindness. For the
mother, who was the dear friend
I would fain do my duty by
will not be warned and counsell
bility is at an end. You are a
every canon of decency that y
yourself and your property in
an unprincipled adventurer, w
a convict in an English gaol."

The keenness of the glance
Hobbs delivered herself of thi
showed that she counted it her

"Mrs. Hobbs, I will not hear
voice thrilled with anger, whil
electric bell till its clang reve
the house. The sound brou
haste to the room. Her mi
signal made her hasten to open

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Washington Hobbs, who, with elaborately maintained dignity and a consciousness of martyr-like devotion to duty, walked slowly from the house.

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CHAPTER XIII

MADDALENA

After Mrs. Hobbs had gone, Gabrielle, white and tremulous, made a resolute effort to keep calm. "I will not suffer myself to be disturbed by what she has said," was her thought; "it is really not of the least importance how she regards Basil. I know him to be good and true. It is not in her power to shake my confidence in him."

So she sat down, and, taking up a journal, made a well-sustained pretence of being absorbed in it; but did not in the least deceive Marcella, as she lingered to set things in order, hoping to learn in what way Mrs. Hobbs had offended her mistress. Marcella had to quit the room with her curiosity unsatisfied.

The door had hardly closed on her when the newspaper dropped from Gabrielle's hands. She had not grasped the meaning of a single line she had read. She put her hand to her side, con-

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scious of physical distress. Something seemed wrong with her heart. It was fluttering strangely, and she had difficulty in drawing her breath. Her hands were deadly cold. She rose and went to the fireplace in a corner of the room. Marcella had placed fresh wood upon the hearth, and it was blazing brightly. Gabrielle sank on to a low chair and cowered close to the flames, extending her hands to catch the warmth.

"It is not true," she said to herself half aloud; "I know it is not true. If it were I could not bear it."

"But it is true about his father," she reflected a moment later. "How can she have learned it? Oh, it is wicked of people to gossip about such things! And to imagine that because his father was bad, he must be bad too! But whoever doubts him, I will believe in him. Nothing can shake my faith in him."

And yet, though she knew it not, already her faith was shaken. The very tenacity with which she clung to it showed that it was slipping from her.

The voice of Lupo, angrily barking in the garden, roused her from her thoughts. Apparently some creature, probably a cat lurking in the shrubbery, was exciting his indignation. A minute later Gabrielle's ear caught the sound of a train leav-

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ing the station. It was the five o'clock train, and she remembered that it was carrying Basil Theyn to Bordighera. Her heart grew heavy with the thought of the long evening she must be prepared to spend alone. If Basil were there she could forget the unpleasant interview with Mrs. Hobbs; but in his absence it would continue to haunt her mind.

She rose with a sudden restless impulse. The house was unbearable. She would take a walk ere the daylight went. Hastily putting on a warm wrap, for the coldest hour of the day was approaching, she passed into the garden by the window, thus avoiding Marcella's observation. She walked down the path, calling Lupo in subdued tones. He came out of the shrubbery, bounded joyfully against her and began licking her hands. Gabrielle turned into the arbour. It was almost dark beneath its shade; but she lingered there, renewing in memory the hour, only a few days since, when she and Basil had pledged their troth at that spot. His presence seemed to pervade its shelter still, and a thrill of joy swept through her as she thought of the love she had won.

She stood for awhile looking down into the road, still astir with vehicles and with people walking on the promenade.

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A low, glad bark from Lupo made her turn her head. She started as she perceived a tall figure standing at the entrance to the arbour. It was a woman, and Lupo was leaping against her and licking her hands.

Gabrielle's heart seemed to stand still within her as she recognized the queenly form and the heavy raven-black tresses adorned by the scarlet kerchief. Even in the uncertain light the dark eyes seemed to flash as they met hers.

"You!" Gabrielle exclaimed involuntarily, "You! here!"

"Ah!" said the other, "you know me!"

"Yes," Gabrielle answered in Italian, "I know you are—Maddalena."

"So!" exclaimed the contadina, with a swift gesture and a scornful laugh, "you know my name! He then has spoken of me!"

The blood flamed up in Gabrielle's face from sudden anger.

"If it is of the *Signor Pittore* that you speak in that way," she said coldly, "certainly he has told me that you are his model."

"His model!" exclaimed Maddalena, throwing up her arms dramatically, while her features quivered with passion; "his model indeed! I am his wife."

An electric shock seemed to pass through

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Gabrielle as she heard the words; but the next moment her spirit rose in passionate indignation to repudiate them.

"How dare you say such a thing?" she demanded, moving nearer to the woman and gazing into her face with eyes as dark and brilliant as her own. "It is false: you know it."

"False! False that I am his wife!" cried Maddalena vehemently; "may the Madonna forgive you for saying it! Do you see that ring?" She thrust out her brown hand, large but shapely, and, holding it to the light, showed a heavy gold ring on the third finger. "He put it upon my finger before the altar of the Madonna, in the Church of San Romolo. Ask the Padre Antonio, if you doubt my word. He knows that he married us on the twentieth of August, five years ago. Ask any one at San Romolo. They all know that I am his wife."

Gabrielle staggered back a step or two, then sank upon one of the chairs that stood within the arbour, while the contadina continued her passionate utterance—

"*Madonna mia!* I hope I know that I am his wife. Ah! and he loved me before you came to bewitch him with your dainty little form, your tiny feet, your pretty gowns. Ah, yes, he loved me, for I nursed him when he was ill with

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fever, and he would have died of it had it not been for me and mother. When he was getting better he said: 'Maddalena, I owe my life to you, and you shall be my wife; for I have not met with a better woman than you since I lost my mother.' Oh! I was so happy that day! and all the days that followed till you came and tempted him to be false to me. Oh! how I hate you! Before ever I saw you, I knew that some one was drawing him from me. I felt that his love was growing cold. I knew that it was for a woman that he wanted that dog. He would not have taken so much trouble about it else. Oh, how I hated you when I saw you with him that day at Bussana!"

"Ah!" said Gabrielle, with a shiver, as the woman paused in her torrent of words from sheer lack of breath; "then it was you I saw, and you threw down that stone on purpose?"

"It is true," cried the woman, throwing out her arms, while a fierce light shone in her eyes; "I wanted to kill you. I hated you for stealing his love from me. Bah! what is there in that pale, baby face and undersized form that he should prefer you to me? It must be witchcraft. I would kill you now, you little witch, if I could!"

Gabrielle seemed hardly to hear the cruel words. Her arms were on the table and her

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head had fallen forward on them. She made no reply, and her silence increased the rage of the other woman.

"Why don't you speak?" she cried, "what is the matter with you? Do you want me to kill you?"

"I think you have killed me," said Gabrielle faintly as she raised her head. But she spoke in English and Maddalena failed to understand her.

"Will you tell him what I have said?" she demanded; "will you drive him farther from me? May the Madonna's curse rest on you if you do!"

Gabrielle looked the passionate woman steadily in the face.

"You need not curse me," she said very low. "If what you say is true, I am cursed already. But I cannot quite believe it yet. Basil Theyn is my friend. I thought him good and true. I have promised to be his wife. I cannot think that he would have dared to speak to me of love, if what you say is true."

"It is true," exclaimed Maddalena, "I swear to you by the Madonna that every word I have uttered is true. Ask him if it is not true; let him deny it if he dare. So you have promised to be his wife, have you? But you cannot marry him, for he is my husband."

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"*Il mio marito*," the woman's last words, echoed dully through Gabrielle's brain for some moments ere she spoke.

"No," she said at last, as if speaking to herself, "I cannot marry him. It is impossible. That dream is over."

Then, turning to Maddalena, she said slowly: "You need not be afraid; I will not interfere with you; I will not destroy what happiness you have. There is little enough in this world, God knows."

"You will not try to part us?" asked the woman eagerly.

A deep flush of shame mounted to Gabrielle's forehead.

"Most certainly not," she replied. "What do you take me for that you ask the question? Do you think I want—your husband? But now will you leave me to myself? You have said what you came to say; please go."

The wave of the hand which accompanied the words left Maddalena in no doubt as to their meaning; but ere she obeyed she bent nearer and searched the lady's face with her keen dark eyes. The gipsy strain in her blood made her quick to read faces. She studied Gabrielle's till she was convinced of her sincerity. Then, with a sweeping reverence, suggestive of mockery,

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Maddalena turned away, and Lupo followed her to the gate of the villa.

Gabrielle's head sank down again upon her hands. After some minutes she roused herself, and, moving like one in a dream, and benumbed with cold, walked slowly towards the house. She entered as she had quitted it, by the window. Not many minutes had passed since she went out, but as she seated herself again by the glowing fire it seemed to her that she had grown old in the interval. A deadly faintness crept over her, and when Marcella entered a little later she found her mistress stretched unconscious on the hearth-rug.

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CHAPTER XIV

LOVE AS A TEMPTER

BASIL THEYN returned to San Remo by the mid-day train. He was accompanied by his Canadian friend, or he would doubtless have taken his way from the station to the Villa Buonsoggiorno. As they ascended the flight of steps from the station his eyes turned longingly in the direction of the garden, half hoping to catch a glimpse of Gabrielle. But she was not in sight, and he walked on with a sudden and unaccountable sense of depression. His friend lunched with him, and they spent the afternoon in the studio discussing pictures, with the result that several of Theyn's pictures became the property of his visitor. He had cause to be well content with the afternoon's business; but he was far from feeling elated as he saw the Canadian depart by the five o'clock train. It was little more than twenty-four hours since he had parted from

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self-control and speaking with angry vehemence; "it is just what I foresaw, what I dreaded all the time. You pretend to love her, but what men call love is mostly compounded of selfishness and vanity, and your love has only brought her misery."

"What can you mean?" he said; "how have I been so unfortunate as to distress her?"

"I don't know what you have done; she will not tell me, but you must know well enough," said Marcella. "I believe you have broken her heart, and I will never forgive you—never!"

"I could never forgive myself if what you say were true," he replied. "Her happiness is as dear to me as it is to you; but I cannot understand this. I must see her and have an explanation."

"You cannot see her to-day," said Marcella; "you cannot and you *shall* not."

He looked at her, measuring his determination by hers. There was no doubt in his mind as to which had the stronger will.

"Oh, very well," he said, with apparent carelessness; "but at least let me ask you a question. You say that Mrs. Grant is far from well; has she seen a medical man?"

"No," Marcella replied reluctantly; "but she is really ill. She needs perfect quiet."

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"Ah! Then everything must be done to secure it for her," he said. "Will you tell her how grieved I am, and that I shall hope to call to-morrow?"

"I will tell her," responded Marcella with a look that said more than her words. He walked away. Marcella stood on guard before the gate for some minutes longer, watching him as he retreated. Then she followed slowly.

When Theyn reached the corner of the street in which he lived he looked back. Marcella was entering Cook's office. He went on a few steps, turned into a side street, and made his way back to the Villa Buonsoggiorno by another route.

Lupo, wandering disconsolately in the garden, welcomed him joyously.

"So Lupo," he said as he caressed him, "she will not see you either, eh? Well, it is only what I expected if certain things came to her knowledge."

The woman who opened the door assured him that Mrs. Grant was unable to see him. Theyn wrote a few words on his card: "I am grieved to learn that you are suffering. If indeed you are too ill to see me, I will lose no time in procuring for you the best medical advice; otherwise I claim my right as your betrothed to hear from you what troubles you."

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"Take this to your mistress," he said, thrusting the card with a ten-franc note into the contadina's hand. Her eyes brightened, and she smilingly invited him to enter. Theyn passed into the drawing-room, and she carried the card upstairs.

She returned in a few minutes and said that the signora would come to him. She went away and Theyn waited in a silence so profound that he seemed to hear the beating of his own heart. Each minute that passed was like ten, till at last he heard the rustle of Gabrielle's gown and her slow, light step upon the stairs.

As she entered he was startled to see how white she was. Her gown was of black silk, absolutely unrelieved by white, and against it her face, neck and hands looked like marble. Her glance as it swept him for a moment was scarcely less cold. She did not offer him her hand, but with the slightest inclination of the head pointed him to a chair at a distance from the one into which she glided. But Theyn advanced and stood before her.

"Gabrielle," he said, "what does this mean? What has come to you that you treat me thus?"

"I should think you hardly need to ask," she said, and her tones, though low and faint, were expressive of scorn; "it is only that I have seen —your wife!"

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"Ah!" He drew a long breath ere he said, "I have no wife. You do not suppose I should have dared to ask you to marry me if any other woman had a legal right to bear my name?"

"Dared!" repeated Gabrielle in tones that vibrated with the emotion she was struggling to control; "you would not have *dared*, you say! She said that you dare not deny that she was your wife."

"I see," said Theyn quietly, after a moment's silence; "I will not profess to misunderstand you. You have seen Maddalena Bracci, and she has told you that she is my wife. Well, I say that she is not."

"Then it is not true that you were married at the church of San Romolo, and it was not you who placed on her finger the ring which she showed me?" exclaimed Gabrielle, while hope leaped to new life within her.

A shadow passed over Theyn's face. "Listen to me, Gabrielle, and I will tell you all," he said. "I cannot deny, alas! that I have acted very wrongly. I ought to have told you before; but I was afraid of how you might take it, and I wanted to spare you pain."

"It was a cruel kindness," said Gabrielle in a choked voice, "to leave me to hear such things as I have heard, first from Mrs. Hobbs, and then

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from Maddalena; but if you can tell me that it is not true——"

"I cannot say there is no truth in what you have heard," replied Theyn. "It is true that Maddalena believes that she is my wife."

"That is enough," cried Gabrielle, her face growing crimson as she raised her hand in protest against further speech; "you have told me more than enough. Now I wish to hear no more. I wish to see you no more. Your profession of love for me was an insult. You are a false and wicked man."

"I deserve this," he said, "but again I ask you to listen to me. Be merciful, be pitiful, Gabrielle. Remember what my life has been since I came to San Remo—how isolated, how motiveless. When I fell ill with fever, five years ago, I had no wish to recover. Life was not worth clutching at. I was very ill, and I should have died but for Maddalena and her mother. Maddalena proved a wonderful nurse. I cannot tell you what her devotion was. She simply would not let me die. When I grew better an impulse of gratitude made me ask her to marry me. I need not tell you, Gabrielle, that I had no such love for her as I have for you; but I never dreamed that there could be in store for me such blessedness as your love. I thought life had nothing

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better to offer me than such simple, dog-like devotion as Maddalena's. I knew that I could make her happy, though for me there could be no ideal companionship in such a marriage, and at least I should be no longer absolutely lonely. So we were married at the little church of San Romolo; but our union was never legalized by the civil marriage. I meant to be legally married at the Municipal Office in San Remo; but owing to my being a foreigner, the thing entailed some slight trouble, and in the lassitude left by the fever I let it slide. Maddalena could not be persuaded of the necessity for such a step. So far was she from desiring it that she had a positive repugnance to the idea. It was enough for her that we had been married by the priest."

"Then," said Gabrielle hurriedly and breathlessly, as he paused, "then you did not mean to betray her? You meant to make her truly your wife?"

"Why, of course," he said; "I am not a scoundrel. I meant her to be my wife; but as a matter of fact she is not, and now—now——"

"Now," she repeated, fixing her eyes on him with a curious intentness.

His face was crimson. His long, lithe hands worked nervously. It was not easy to express what he wanted to say.

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"Gabrielle," he stammered, "we cannot pretend that my marriage with Maddalena was ever a true marriage. She has the mind of a child; she does not understand me in the least. My work, my thoughts, my real life are as a sealed book to her. What have we in common? What sympathy has she for me? None! Whereas you, Gabrielle, are the woman God meant to be my wife. Your heart answers to my heart. You understand me as none other can. Our union would make each life complete. You know that it is as I say."

"No, I do not know it," said Gabrielle slowly. "I thought so yesterday, but now—I do not see what we have to do with that now."

"Why, just this," he said eagerly, "since I am not legally bound to her, and I am, heart and soul, bound to you, it is not, it cannot be, right that she should come between us."

"What!" exclaimed Gabrielle in a tone sharp with pain, "you can suggest that it is right to repudiate your marriage when she believes in it, when she has trusted herself to your honour! Oh, that would indeed be to act like a scoundrel."

"But, Gabrielle, listen to me," he began. She checked him with a quick gesture.

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"How can I listen when you talk so? Why, judged in that way my marriage to Abel Grant was not a true one; but what would you have thought of me if I had been faithless to my vows?"

"But the cases are not parallel," he urged. "Do try to judge reasonably. I assure you, I do not mean to treat Maddalena dishonourably. I have thought and planned for her good. I mean that the Casa Rossa shall still be her home and her mother's. I shall make it over to her by a deed of gift and settle upon her an income that, with the produce of the garden and vineyard, will suffice for their maintenance. Such an episode as her connection with me is not a thing of great moment in the life of an Italian contadina. She will soon forget me and marry some one of her own class."

"How can you talk so?" cried Gabrielle indignantly, "when she loves you and believes herself to be your wife! Would you drive her into sin?"

"Sin! My dear Gabrielle, it is easy to see that you have had a Puritanical up-bringing. There can be no sin where there is no consciousness of evil. The contadini of Italy have no strict code of morality, and, even if Maddalena suspected there was wrong in it, her

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priest would willingly absolve her from the guilt for a couple of liras."

"But we—we know better," said Gabrielle. "We know that we should be driving her to act in opposition to God's 'Thou shalt not.' And I too! I am filled with shame when I think that you are her husband."

"But I am not," he protested. "I am not her husband. You and none other are my wife in the sight of Heaven."

"Oh!" exclaimed Gabrielle excitedly, "do not speak of Heaven when you say such a thing as that! You shall never persuade me to count your marriage nought. How could I so wrong another woman? How could I be happy at the expense of her suffering? And you, whom I thought so good and noble, would urge me to this! Oh, how is one ever to know what men really are?"

"You may condemn me as much as you please, Gabrielle," said Theyn; "indeed, I deserve it; but I am sure it cannot be right for you to condemn us both to unhappiness for the sake of a mistaken sentiment, a false notion of right and wrong. Such love as ours makes its own laws. Darling, how can you suppose that the God of love, in Whom you believe, has brought us together and made us find so much in each

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other, only to mock us? What does l
say? 'God creates the love to rew
love.'"

"But to argue in that way would m
thing right," said Gabrielle; "treacl
fidelity, murder even might be just
What right has any man to break l
simply because they have become incon
Oh, what is the use of talking? You m
that you are bound in honour to Madd

He did know it, and he chafed u
knowledge, though he would not a
Gabrielle's eyes looked steadily into l
moment; then she rose and went tow
door. Her face was utterly colourless
moved uncertainly, as though her stren
failing. Theyn hastened to her. Sh
to him to go back.

"Don't come nearer," she said. "
over between us now. I shall go
will never willingly see you again."

But he came close to her, as if she
spoken, and taking her hands held th
within his own.

"Nay, if we must part, it is I who will g
he said; "but, Gabrielle—you have n
to love me—why will you be false
woman's heart? Why sacrifice the l

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of both our lives, and deny me the love that would be my salvation, from a false sense of duty? Believe me, you do not understand Maddalena. She is not such a woman as you are, my darling. When I leave her—for leave her I shall whether you become my wife or not—she will weep and rave for a day or two, and then the storm will be over. She will begin to enjoy the good things of life once more and make herself happy. Her nature is passionate but shallow."

"I think you are mistaken," said Gabrielle; "I am sure that she loves you. But, whatever her nature may be, I can't think that it makes any difference. If I married you now, I should be committing a sin."

"A sin!" he repeated. "Is it a sin to be happy? A sin to love! No, Gabrielle, believe me, the sin is to be false to love. Oh, if you loved as I do, you would know that it is worth while to renounce everything for love."

"Ah! but not to sacrifice another, not to wrong one's own soul," cried Gabrielle tremulously. "Oh, do not tempt me! I cannot do it! I will not listen to you. Oh, let me go and, if you have any love for me, let me never see you again!"

She tore her hands from his and escaped. Hurrying breathlessly up the stairs she locked

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herself within her own room. Almost at the same moment Marcella entered the house. Theyn passed her in the hall, and her face darkened with anger as she saw him; but he went by in absolute unconsciousness, his pale, drawn face wearing the look of a man in desperation.

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CHAPTER XV

THE LOVE THAT SAVES

It was midnight. The house was closed and the quiet of night had descended upon it. Gabrielle, finding sleep impossible, sat by the fire in her bedroom, wrapped in a dressing-gown. She had dismissed Marcella early, pleading fatigue; but, though profoundly weary, she could not rest.

No sound came from the adjoining room which her maid occupied; but Marcella too was awake. Her heart was too full of sorrowful solicitude for the mistress she loved for her to lose herself in sleep. Marcella was the more troubled because she was in ignorance of the precise cause of Gabrielle's evident distress. Clearly it was connected with Mr. Theyn. It was easy to see that there was a change in their relationship. Marcella believed, and indeed hoped, that the engagement was at an end. But Gabrielle had

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uttered no word of explanation, and it hurt Marcella that she, who had shared the troubles of her earlier life, should now be shut out of her confidence. Her indignation towards Basil Theyn burned ever more warmly while she harassed her mind with conjectures as to what had come to pass.

A clock somewhere had just struck twelve. Gabrielle shivered and threw another log on the embers which she had suffered almost to die out. Her heart was sick within her. Looking forward into the future the intolerable void it presented filled her with despair. Oh, why, why had perfect love—the one thing which makes life worth living—come to her and to Basil too late? Why had she been tantalised by the promise of a joy that could never be hers? Why must suffering be for ever her lot in life? Ah! and his too. As she thought of Basil, recalling the anguish she had read in his face, the passionate pleading of his glance and voice, her jealousy of Maddalena died out. She knew that he had spoken truly. She alone was the woman he loved. She could have made him happy. For each, life would become a greater and nobler thing if their lives were joined.

With these thoughts in her mind, Gabrielle suddenly became aware of a mysterious sound

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within the house. Was it a stealthy step upon the stairs? A thrill of terror ran through her as she realized the possible presence of a midnight intruder bent on robbery. But there was Lupo whose excellence as a watch-dog she had often vaunted. How could any one enter without his raising an alarm?

The step, for a step it certainly was, drew nearer. With throbbing heart and trembling frame Gabrielle reminded herself that her door was securely locked. The step paused. She was aware of a curious, rustling sound. She turned her terrified eyes upon the door, and lo! pushed from behind it, a folded paper appeared upon her polished floor. The step retreated. She had only to lean a little from her chair to take the paper. In a moment she saw that the writing upon it was Theyn's, and her fears were allayed.

As she held the paper, it seemed to bring Theyn himself close to her A feeling of comfort and rest stole over her. She forgot that he had wronged her. She opened her hand that she might press her lips to the paper he had written. She laid it against her cheek. Then she read it. It bore signs of having been written in haste.

"Darling," he said, "I am about to obey

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your wish and leave San Remo. The train which starts from Ventimiglia shortly before dawn will carry me to Paris. I have been walking up and down in front of your house, the dearest spot in the world to me while it holds you. Seeing a light in your window, I am constrained to make one more appeal to you to reflect ere you ruin both our lives.

"Gabrielle, you are under the dominion of a totally wrong idea, a wholly mistaken notion of duty. What you shrink from, conceiving it to be a sin, would show you to be a brave, large-minded woman, capable of thinking for herself and defying the opinion of the world with its narrow conventions and hypocritical pretence of morality. You know what you are to me; you know what my life might become under the inspiration of your daily companionship. As regards Maddalena, your decision can make no difference to her one way or the other. Dearest, come to me. Don't condemn us both to misery. Do not say a word to Marcella; but take counsel of your own heart and then just put together what you need for the journey and come to me where I wait in your garden. We will drive to Ventimiglia and take the train for Paris. Later you can send directions to Marcella. You need never return to San Remo. We will travel for

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a time and then make a home wherever you choose. I will do everything you wish, and we will be happy, so happy, my darling.

"Come to me, Gabrielle. Come, come.

"Don't wreck our lives for the sake of a fictitious scruple.

"I must act as an amateur burglar to get this note to you. Forgive me, darling. You will forgive me, because you love me, and you will come to me.

"Ever and only your

"BASIL."

A wave of passionate emotion swept through Gabrielle as she read his words. Was it the magnetic influence of his presence close at hand which made her heart suddenly turn traitor to her conscience and cry out that nothing mattered but love and that it must be right that their love should break down every barrier and triumph in spite of all? As she kissed the words Basil had penned and laid the paper against her cheek, it seemed to her as if Basil's arms were about her, his heart beating close to hers. Drawn by an irresistible impulse, she went to the window and drew aside the light curtain that screened it. The night was not dark. No moon was visible but the sky was gemmed with stars. He was

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there, standing by the gate beneath the drooping pepper tree. Her heart leaped within her as she recognized him. He was waiting for her. She must go to him. He was right; it was an unreal scruple that could hold them apart. They belonged to each other. She was his; he was hers. Why should she give up her happiness, ay, and sacrifice his happiness too, for the sake of such an one as Maddalena? She had suffered so much; she had known so little happiness; she could not, and she would not, give it up when it was just within her grasp.

"I am coming, dearest, I am coming," she murmured low as she waved her hand towards the distant form. "I love you with every fibre of my being and I cannot resist your will. I must be yours, whatever it may mean." Did he see her signal? She could not tell. Turning from the window, she tried to calm her excitement and forced herself to think of what she would need to carry with her, slowly collecting the things and placing them in a travelling bag. She moved as quietly as she could, opening drawers and boxes with the least possible noise, lest she should rouse the ever-watchful Marcella. Her mind was wonderfully alert and she fancied she had forgotten nothing when at last she stood fully equipped for the journey, her neat high

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boots buttoned, her hat and veil carefully adjusted and her fur-lined cloak at hand to wrap her from the cold. Her preparations had taken some time for she was accustomed to Marcella's assistance, and missed her at every turn. Looking at her watch she saw with alarm that nearly an hour had gone by. She hurried to the window and perceived with a sudden pang that Theyn was not where he had been. She stood motionless, smitten with fear. Had she delayed too long! Had he taken her silence as a refusal and gone? No, there he was—pacing the path beside the arbour! She could breathe freely again. Now it only remained to steal quietly out of the house and join him. How devoutly she hoped that Marcella was soundly sleeping! As the thought came to her a slight noise within the maid's room made her heart thrill with fear. Glancing round she perceived to her surprise that the door which communicated with the next room was ajar. How strange that she had not noticed it before? Again there was a movement within the room. Marcella was awake. What was to be done now?

Gabrielle stood irresolute for some moments, feeling an irritation with Marcella, which that good, faithful maid certainly did not deserve. Then she stole on tip-toe to the door and, noise-

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lessly opening it an inch or two wider, peeped into the room. A night-light burning on the floor threw a faint light around and sufficed to show Marcella's ample form, rendered more conspicuous by the large-patterned plaid dressing-gown in which she had arrayed herself, kneeling beside the bed. Her clasped hands, her up-turned face wet with tears, her rapidly-moving lips showed that she was praying volubly and fervently.

Gabrielle was arrested by the sight. Startled and awed, like one who in an unholy mood has strayed into a spot so sacred that he must perforce pause and reflect, she watched Marcella till presently her prayer became audible, and words passed her lips which made Gabrielle aware that this faithful friend was praying for her, praying that she might be delivered from danger, from temptation, from whatever form of evil it might be that threatened her; for Marcella was absolutely certain of but one thing—that her mistress was in trouble and needed to be prayed for.

What was there in Marcella's broken utterances that awoke in Gabrielle the holiest memories of her childhood? The links in the chain of memory cannot always be traced; but, however it was, Gabrielle had at that moment a vision

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of the father she had so deeply loved, the father whom she had always felt to be the best and noblest of men; at once a perfect gentleman and a most sincere Christian. After her marriage, which she had come to regard as the most deplorable mistake of her life, the thought of her father had seldom come to Gabrielle without moving her to self-reproach. Now it suddenly aroused her dormant conscience and made her aware that she was about to make another serious mistake. A mistake! Was it not rather a sin? Did she not *know* it to be a sin in spite of all Basil Theyn might say to the contrary? Ah, truly, the "Thou shalt not" of God could not be so lightly set aside. How could it be other than evil, a wrong which would surely bring its punishment, to repudiate the rights of the woman who had loved Basil Theyn and given herself to him? Gabrielle could be in no doubt as to how her father would have regarded the situation in which she found herself at this hour.

As Gabrielle gently drew the door to and moved away, Marcella's prayer was already answered. Gabrielle too sank on her knees and covered her face in the attitude of prayer; but no prayer could she utter. A struggle was going on within her. The love which had become her

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very life cried out for its satisfaction even while she knew that God had said, "Thou shalt not do this thing." Once more the temptation of her life confronted her and she felt impelled to do wrong in the hope of reaping good. But still Marcella prayed and slowly the light grew in Gabrielle's mind, and she saw through the web of sophistry in which Theyn had sought to entangle her. It can never be right to do wrong. Love cannot make evil good. It is better to suffer than to sin. As the truth came home to her she suddenly rose and, without daring to look forth, closed the shutters of her window. When he saw that the light had gone and she did not appear, he would know that there was no response to his appeal. She kneeled again, not consciously praying, but leaning on a sense of the nearness and help of God. How long she had waited thus she did not know, when the stillness of the night was broken by the sound of a carriage rolling rapidly down the road. Too well she knew what it meant. It was bearing Theyn to Ventimiglia. She had conquered her temptation, but victory did not bring joy. A sense of the loneliness and desolation into which he was going, as well as of her own, seemed to break her heart. She threw herself on the bed and thrust her face into the pillow that she might

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smother the sobs that shook her from head to foot.

At last from sheer exhaustion she fell asleep, but not for long. When she woke, the morning was still young. She threw back her shutters and saw the garden bright with sunshine and a gloriously blue sea. But her heart grew faint as the pain of the past night and all the weariness of the long struggle with herself came back to her. She looked into Marcella's room and found it empty. There was one thought in her mind as she hurriedly made her toilette: "I must get away from this place and never see it again."

She was so white that Marcella, when she presently appeared with a cup of tea for her mistress, was alarmed and begged her to lie down again; but Gabrielle would not listen to her. All she wanted was to breathe the fresh air of the morning. She was soon in the garden; but the garden had too many poignant associations for her to remain there. She passed out of the gate and instinctively took the path which wound upwards through the olive gardens.

There was a touch of frost in the air and Gabrielle was thankful for the energy it gave her. Already there were people working amongst the olives. They looked with wondering

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eyes at the lady as she went by
heeded them not. So wrapped
she, so little aware of their presen
occurred to her to bid them good-
unflagging step she went on up t
path till she reached the little wa
which Theyn had found her or
which now seemed so long ago
of breath and her limbs were
the climb, so once more she se
the broad steps that led up to th

The voices of the contadini
softened by distance as she sat th
a keen edge to the wind that bl
she was unconscious of the cold
opening in the olives she could
the blue sea. She sat with her
knee and her chin on her hand
thoughts which yielded her no
she was thinking of the man
would not again hear descend
road. The sound of a step ro
looked round and saw a conta
the steps. She was an aged, to
who had come from her wor
garden to pray at the little chap

"*Buon giorno*," she said briefly
The door of the chapel was fa

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woman had evidently no intention of entering. In a business-like way she ascended the steps and kneeled before an open, casementless window in the porch. From where she sat Gabrielle could not see the object before which the woman prostrated herself; but she imagined it to be a picture or image of the Madonna. She watched her as she prayed, and saw that her prayer was no mere form. Tears were rolling down her bronzed, furrowed cheek. She rocked herself to and fro as she prayed and her lips quivered as she whispered her petitions. She rose and moved away a few steps, and then went back and kneeled again in a new access of passionate supplication.

For what was she praying, Gabrielle wondered—for the life of her husband or her child? A sympathy and compassion, born of her own sorrow, awoke in her, and as the woman passed her on her way back to work, Gabrielle touched her and, pressing a coin into her hand, said in Italian, "May the good God help you and grant you what you have asked."

"A thousand thanks, gentle lady," responded the contadina. "I hope He has heard me. I was praying for my son's wife. He loves her like his life, and she is dying. Ah! it is hard! They had so wished for a little one, and now a

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little son is given; but the mother, the doctor says, will die. Ah! but the Madonna is very pitiful, and the Lord can save!"

"And the Lord too is very pitiful," said Gabrielle, speaking the truth she had always professed to believe, but feeling a new comfort in the words as they passed her lips.

"Ah! I believe it, since He hung on the Cross for us!" said the woman fervently. "May He comfort you too, dear lady; for there is sorrow in your face, although you are so young and beautiful. It is natural that the poor and the old should have grief; but for such as you life should be full of happiness."

"Ah no! Life is hard for us all," said Gabrielle, and tears welled up in her eyes.

The woman sighed and assented; then went on her way comforted by the sympathy she had so unexpectedly found.

When she had gone, Gabrielle rose and went to the top of the steps. She looked through the opening at which the woman had knelt, and saw that it was not an image of the Madonna before which she had bowed herself. Within, simply pinned against a wooden partition, was a small engraving, scarcely larger than the palm of one's hand, representing our Saviour on the Cross. Towards this the contadini directed

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their gaze when they knelt to pray at that spot. It was a minute copy of the sublime picture by Guido Reni, which Browning has declared "second to nought observable in Rome." As she gazed on it, Gabrielle too was constrained to fall upon her knees in adoring recognition of the Cross which is the explanation and the solace of all life's mystery of pain and woe. She leaned her own bitter cross against the mighty Cross of the Redeemer, and her grief was calmed by the contemplation of His unutterable woe. As she knelt there, mutely pleading for relief from her burden, it seemed to her that a hand was laid on her heart gently soothing its sore smart and lifting the heaviness from her soul, while a voice whispered in her ear: "Fear thou not, for I am with thee."

A little later Gabrielle walked slowly down through the olives to the town. The sun shone brightly on the roofs below; the sea lay blue beyond, and in her heart there was a great calm. Not that her sorrow was gone. Sorrow is not so short-lived. It seemed to her that she could never be other than sad again; but she had accepted her pain as the will of God; she had told herself that happiness was not what she had to look for in life; but to be true to the best she knew. No good could come to her, nor to one

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dearer than herself, save by doing right. Her life was still an enigma; but she would wait patiently for its solution, trusting to God to make its meaning plain in His own time.

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CHAPTER XVI

DUTY'S BOND

By the time Gabrielle reached the villa she was intensely weary. So spent was she that she could hardly have walked another step, and it was a comfort to see Marcella's homely face and substantial form standing within the gate watching anxiously for her.

"Thank God!" escaped Marcella's lips as her mistress came in sight. Since she went out, Marcella had made discoveries in Gabrielle's room which had filled her with amazement and fear. She was relieved to see her mistress approaching.

"Dear madam, how ill you look!" she said; "why did you go out alone? You are not fit. I should have come to meet you if I had known in what direction you had gone."

"It is all right, Marcella," Gabrielle said, but she was glad to lean heavily on her maid's arm as they crossed the garden.

Marcella led her mistress into the dining-room,

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where a bright wood fire blazed and the table was laid for breakfast. She placed her in an easy chair and proceeded to remove her hat and coat. Gabrielle's eyes fell on a letter which had been placed on the mantelshelf.

"A letter for me!" she said, stretching out her hand.

"Yes, a letter from America," Marcella said as she gave it to her. But Gabrielle's interest in the letter was gone. She let it drop into her lap and leaned forward, holding her hands, which were very cold, towards the crackling fire.

The maid began to take off Gabrielle's boots. "Why, madam, your feet feel like ice," she said as she gently rubbed them.

"My head is not like ice," said Gabrielle wearily, "it burns and throbs."

Marcella glanced at her with loving anxiety ere she drew on the little feet a pair of dainty morocco slippers bordered with fur.

A heavy sigh escaped Gabrielle. As her faithful maid bent over her she suddenly caught her dusky face between her small white hands and kissed it.

"You are a good soul, Marcella," she said tremulously, "I know you will never forsake me."

"Madam would know little if she did not know that," said Marcella with a dryness that was assumed to hide her emotion. "But you are

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wanting your breakfast. I will go and hurry Lisetta's movements while you read your letter."

Gabrielle glanced at the letter. She recognized the handwriting of Mr. Meredith, her friend and lawyer. Marcella went out and closed the door behind her.

"What business can Mr. Meredith have written about now?" thought Gabrielle. "Well, it will have to be read, so I may as well read it now as later."

She slowly opened the envelope, carelessly unfolded the letter, and began to read it. She had not read many words ere she started up in amazement. Her face, pale enough before, became absolutely colourless. Her brain grew dizzy; the lines swam before her eyes. A cold moisture bedewed her forehead. Marcella, re-entering, was appalled by her mistress's appearance. Gabrielle, half-fainting, thrust the letter into her maid's hands. "Read this," she said hoarsely, "and tell me what it means. I cannot understand it; I cannot even see the words."

This was the letter which Marcella read and the substance of which she gradually conveyed to Gabrielle:

"Dear Mrs. Grant,—

"I am writing to send you news of such an

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"When his body was discovered on the bank of the river, some inhuman wretch, taking him for dead, had despoiled him of his clothing and there was upon him no trace of his identity. Till he could utter his name no one knew who he was nor imagined that he was other than some poor emigrant. The people here were astounded to learn that he was a man of great wealth.

"He was terribly excited when he recovered consciousness and found that he could not make himself understood. His delight on seeing me was piteous to behold. He spoke eagerly, but with such imperfect enunciation that for a while his words seemed to me only a babble of meaningless sounds. Later, I gathered that he was asking for news of you. I told him, apparently to his astonishment, where you were, and promised to write and ask you to come to him with as little delay as possible.

"Now, my dear friend, I know that you will bear up bravely under this startling turn of events, and that you will return to America as soon as you can. Be sure that I will do everything in my power to help you. Wire me when your vessel starts and I will meet you at New York.

"With sincere sympathy,

"Yours faithfully,

"JOHN MEREDITH."

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"My husband still lives!" said Gabrielle slowly, in a dead, mechanical voice, "still lives! Then I am not—I never was a widow! How strange it seems! I can't believe it somehow."

"It is the most extraordinary thing that ever was heard of," exclaimed Marcella. "People should be more careful ere they declare that any one is dead. Why did not Mr. Meredith make more inquiries? He went to the place after the accident. How was it he did not see *him?*"

Marcella felt an urgent need of some one on whom to vent the angry resentment that the news had excited within her. At that moment she could feel no pity for Abel Grant's helpless, shattered condition nor appreciate the irony of fate which had reduced him to the level of the poorest waif in America. "It is just like him," she said to herself in her unreasonable indignation. "What right has he to be alive? A man with any decency of feeling could not have survived under the circumstances."

"I can't believe it," said Gabrielle again, "but then I could not believe *that* news when it came. I never felt as if it were true till—till——" She checked herself, and a deep, painful blush overspread her face. She looked down on her left hand. There was no ring upon it. After her encounter with Maddalena she had ceased to wear

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the little ring Theyn had given her. It had belonged to his mother and she meant to return it to him.

"I have still my wedding ring," she said almost in a whisper. "I must put it on; I shall know it is true then."

She rose, and in spite of her maid's remonstrances went from the room and slowly ascended the stairs. Marcella would have followed, but Gabrielle waved her back. Unlocking a drawer in her wardrobe she took out a small square box. This, too, had to be unlocked ere she could take out the ring. As she drew it on and looked down on the gold circlet, heavy and solid like everything belonging to Abel Grant, all the burden of the past seemed to come back to her.

"What a good thing I kept it!" she said to herself half aloud; "what a good thing I never wore widow's weeds—what a good thing——"

Her glance had fallen on the travelling bag which she had packed on the previous night. She shivered. For one moment she was icy cold, and then a fever heat swept over her. Where would she have been, *what* would she have been, if she had obeyed her rash, lawless impulse to go away with Basil Theyn?

She went below again. Marcella's glance fell on the ring as Gabrielle re-entered the dining-

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room, but she made no co
poured out some coffee, and s
tress to drink it. Gabriel
forced herself to both eat and

"Take your breakfast, M
"You will need it, for we have
us to-day. We shall probabl
Genoa to-night."

"God help you, madam," s
look little fit to travel."

"God will help me," said G
very merciful. You were pr
night, Marcella, and God hea
you had not prayed, I shoul
with Mr. Theyn, and now—now
and I could not go."

"I guessed there was some
Marcella, "and just now, whe
in order, I'll allow I surmis
your plans for going away."

"Yes, I was going—going
commit a sin," said Gabrielle
prayed—and your prayers sta

"God be praised that you
Marcella; "but, oh, this ne
for you."

"Don't say that, Marcell
brokenly. "It is terrible tha

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suffer so; but for myself nothing matters. Ah! you know that when *that* news came I was glad. It was wicked of me; but I was glad. Well, I am not sorry now, for I feel this is God's answer to my prayer. The future seemed such a blank, and I asked to be shown the path of duty. There can be no doubt about it now. I am his wife. My duty is to go to him, to wait upon him, nurse him, help him all I can. God has spoken."

"God bless you, madam," said Marcella fervently. "It is wonderful that you can take it so."

"Oh, no," said Gabrielle wearily; "there is nothing heroic in doing one's duty. We do not live for happiness but for duty. I am glad mine is so plain. It must be sweet when duty and happiness go hand in hand; but that is not the lot of many. The great thing is to be faithful to duty. If it is pleasant, life will be sweet; if it is hard, life will be bitter; but it will not much matter which when the end comes."

"Oh, but the end is still far off for you, madam," said Marcella. "There will be—there must be happiness yet for you. I will pray daily for it."

"No, no, Marcella," said Gabrielle with a sad smile. "You know better than to offer such a prayer. Pray that I may be good, that I may be strong to do my duty. Such prayer is not in vain.

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Oh, no! it must be by prayer
help those we love. But now
work. Will you go at once to (
for the very first steamer by whi
Then you will help me to thinl
be done ere we quit this dear, li
thought to be so happy. You
granted you will go with me."

"I should hope so, indeed,"
face quivering with emotion.
end I follow you, my darling mi

"Where thou goest, I will go
lodgest, I will lodge," said G
sad smile. "You are a second
and verily I feel myself anothe
my position is certainly the rev

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CHAPTER XVII

RENUNCIATION

It was May at San Remo. On that southern coast the beautiful month belongs to summer rather than to spring, and already an outburst of heat had driven most foreign visitors from the place. Hardly any English were to be seen there now. Mr. Barker, the consumptive clergyman, had returned with his wife to their English parish. Mrs. Washington Hobbs was in Paris. Basil Theyn had no fear of encountering undesirable acquaintances as he alighted from a morning train at the familiar station.

The station-master welcomed him effusively. The "Signor" had been away a long while; now he had returned o stay at San Remo, was it not true? For certain, wherever he had been, the signor could find no pleasanter place of residence than San Remo.'

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Theyn responded smilingly. He knew no place of its kind to compare with San Remo. It was a gem. He had been in Paris. The French capital is charming in its way; but it palls after a few weeks. Was all well with the station master's wife and family? That was right. And the little town had had a prosperous season? That was good.

Theyn's smile was no less frequent than it had ever been; his manner was gracious and sympathetic; yet the man who spoke with him was conscious of a change. Surely the artist's face was more lined and worn than when he went away, and it was something new to see silver threads in his dark hair?

The smile faded from Theyn's face as he went up the steps from the station. He sighed heavily as he stood for a moment gazing along the sunlit esplanade. The sea was dazzlingly blue and the long curling billows breaking on the shore were crested with foam. Roses drooped over the garden walls. The air was heavy with the fragrance of magnolias and oleanders. Here were lilies of the valley, mignonette, heliotrope, and the magnificent carnations, cultivated so largely in the neighbourhood, exposed for sale. Flowers were everywhere. The place was a paradise.

Theyn looked towards the Villa Buonsoggiorno;

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then moved on, but paused and turned again. An irresistible impulse drew him to the spot. He opened the gate and entered the garden.

The contadino in charge had been mowing the lawn and was now sweeping the cut grass together with a long broom. He lifted his straw hat and smiled broadly at the sight of Theyn. "Welcome, signor; welcome back to San Remo," he cried.

"A thousand thanks," said Theyn. "The Signora Bertolini has not yet returned!"

"She comes this evening," replied the man; "I am busy getting the place in order for her."

Theyn put some more inquiries while his eyes dwelt on the familiar scene. The drawing-room window stood open. His imagination pictured Gabrielle stepping from it; but he knew this could never be again. Not long after Gabrielle's departure he had seen in an American newspaper, which had chanced to fall in his way, the news that Abel Grant still lived. He knew that Gabrielle had gone to her husband; but not till now had he found courage to return to San Remo. He passed into the arbour and sat down in its welcome shade. Clusters of roses hung from the trellis-work. Gabrielle had never seen the spot so full of beauty. His heart grew faint as he thought of her. The

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warmth and fragrance of summer were about him; but no wintry scene could have struck more desolation to his soul. Here he had tasted the brief, sweet rapture of love; had known the joy of being loved as he loved; now here alone he endured the sorrow of him who is "mindful of the happy time in misery." He smothered a groan as he leaned forward on the table, his head in his hands. "Strange," he reflected, "that there are some pains one would sooner suffer than not. I knew what I should feel if I came here, yet I could not keep away! My God! what a loss is mine! Yet it is better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all. I am thankful to have known her, though she is not for me. I regret nothing save the pain I have caused her. I can never forgive myself that I broke my resolve not to speak of my love. What right had I, bound as I was, to approach her as a lover? I deserve to suffer. But I will make what amends is in my power. I will do what she would have me do."

He drew a letter from the breast-pocket of his coat. It was in a thin, grey envelope, with American stamps on it and bore the Boston post-mark. The corners of the envelope were bent, the paper somewhat crumpled. Clearly he had read the letter many times already. Yet once more he

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opened out the sheet and read the lines written in Gabrielle's clear, upright handwriting, each letter beautifully formed, yet with a character in the forming distinctly her own.

"Dear Friend," she wrote, "your letter has remained a long time unanswered; but I simply could not write before. I should not do so now did I not feel that I owed it to our friendship to let you know how it is with me, so for this once I lift the curtain of silence and separation which must divide us for evermore. Friendship, such as the word ordinarily means, is impossible between us. We have come too near to each other for that. Henceforth I can help you only by my prayers, and at God's mercy-seat alone would I willingly remember you. But there, as long as life shall last, will I implore His blessing for you.

Now let me try to answer your questions in as few words as possible. It is well with me—all well. *God's will is best.* These words express my absolute conviction. You ask me if I have retained my faith in the love of God. Yes, thank God, my faith in His love was never stronger than it is to-day. It is not yet half a year since I left San Remo; but I feel as if a deep chasm of time separated me from that day; for since then I have been 'walking in newness of life.'

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"You ask, is my life endurable ?
than endurable ; it is blessed. I ha
vocation. The meaning of my life i
baffling problem. I have always lor
that I was necessary to the happi
one person—that there was at least
the world who could not do without
childhood I knew that I stood in th
my father, and later my poor mothe
in another way. But after her dea
suppose my husband cared for me i
I never felt that my life made any c
way or another to any one. Now it
wise. My poor husband needs me
on me, clings to me, looks to me
comfort. He can hardly bear me
sight.

"Now let me do justice to Abel Gr
really knew him until now. He h
burden of helplessness with a streng
tude for which I should never hav
credit. It is so sad to see him ; b
in a way that commands my resp
him so much, and pity—pity, you k
love. Yes, I am beginning to love
truly to love him, though not as—bu
speak of that.

"I wonder how it is with you, my

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you still without faith in the Saviour, Who is so much to me? Oh, believe me, the Christ of the Gospels is not dead! He is in the world to-day, healing the broken-hearted, helping the sufferers, standing by their beds of pain ready to heal and save. My poor husband is reaching towards Him with 'lame hands of faith.' Already suffering has wrought a change in him. His thoughts take a new and wider range. He has been talking to me to-day about how he may best devote a large portion of his wealth to alleviating the lot of poor, paralyzed sufferers like himself. Oh, life must become a new thing to every one who believes in God and bows before His will. With all my heart, I pray that He will reveal Himself to you and guide and bless your future. Do you know what I wish? I cannot put it into words; but I think you will know. You will understand that there is a simple, loving, faithful soul on whose heart it was my misfortune to cast a heavy shadow, and to whom I came near doing a cruel wrong. I would fain know that she no longer suffers through my fault. But I am sure you will do what is right. Do not write again. We must not communicate more, but think of me always as

"Your friend,

"GABRIELLE GRANT."

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"She is an angel!" Theyn said half aloud as he lifted his cap from his brow. "She is a veritable Christian," he said a moment later. "No wonder her husband believes when he has her. But is he, indeed, so changed that he has ceased to cause her pain? I should like to hear Marcella's report of him. But she would never condescend to address me. Well, I will do as Gabrielle wishes. It is for that I have come back."

He folded the letter, reverently pressed his lips to it, and laid it once more against his heart. Then he rose, and glancing about him with a tender, lingering gaze, said good-bye to the past, with its delusive hopes, and went slowly from the garden and along the road to the town.

In the main street he entered a lawyer's office and remained there more than half an hour. Then he went on to the house in which was his studio and where his servant had kept guard during his absence. He was approaching the door when a dog came bounding towards him across the road and sprang against him with wild demonstrations of delight. A thrill of painful emotion passed through Theyn as he recognized Lupo. The next moment he saw that Signora Simonetti was advancing to greet him.

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"How good it is to see you here again!" she cried; "a thousand welcomes! Lupo is not more glad to see you than I am, and you see how jubilant he is. He thinks the good old times are coming back."

"Lupo is too sagacious a dog to believe in good old times," said Theyn, striving to speak lightly. "So you have him now and you take good care of him, I can see."

"Mrs. Grant gave him to me when she went away," said the signora; "she said she could not take him with her; he would not be happy where she was going. I am glad you think him looking well, for indeed I thought he would have fretted himself to death after his mistress had gone. How pleased he is to see you! Would you like to have him?"

"Thank you. I have already as many dogs as I want," said Theyn indifferently, though there was nothing he would have liked better than to have Gabrielle's dog, "and I am sure you would not like to part with such a gift."

"Certainly not, only you were such friends that I thought——" Catching a look from Theyn which frightened her, the signora suddenly paused in confusion. Then rallying her courage, she asked: "Can you give me news of Mrs. Grant? I have not heard a word of her since she

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went away. I have her address, and I send her word of Lupo's welfare now and then; but she has never written to me. Oh!"

The latter exclamation was forced from her by an appearance which spared Theyn the necessity of replying. Round the corner by which they were standing came Maddalena in her gayest contadina attire, with a richly embroidered scarf, knotted across her breast, a coral necklace at her throat, the crimson kerchief on her head held in place by huge gold pins, and her largest earrings dangling from her ears. Her face was aglow with colour, her eyes brilliant; she was superb in her beauty as she halted and looked with amazement and some suspicion at the two talking together, while Lupo bounded to welcome her.

"That woman here!" exclaimed the signora in her astonishment; "what can have brought her?"

"She has come by my arrangement," said Theyn, stepping forward and taking Maddalena by the hand. "This woman is my wife, signora."

"Indeed, you surprise me," stammered Signora Simonetti, while Maddalena's face glowed with joy and she bent and kissed passionately the hand that held her own. "I did not know that you were married, and even now I believe you joke. It is not possible that you, an

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The afternoon was still early when Theyn and Maddalena drove from San Remo to the Casa Rossa. They followed the road along which Gabrielle had driven with Signora Simonetti on the afternoon when the first shadow had fallen on her budding joy. Maddalena sat erect, her head more nobly poised than usual as she realized the honour of her recognition in the eyes of the world as the artist's wife. She had been unusually silent, for the look on the grave thoughtful face beside her had inspired her with awe; but as the road wound higher amid the olive groves and the blue mountains, the chestnut woods, and the white houses of San Romolo came into view, she found courage to break the silence.

"Must I still dress as a contadina now that every one knows I am your wife?" she asked.

Theyn looked at her absently for a moment ere he answered.

"You shall do as you like," he said. "You please me best as you are."

"Do I?" she said wistfully. "Well, of course, I want to please you; but—I should like to have a hat."

"Have it if you like, *cara mia*," he said carelessly. "Only it will spoil you. You are far more beautiful as you are."

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"It is because I am beautful you love me, is it not?" she said. "I wish to please your eyes; but I hate that people should call me your contadina wife, as the signora did."

"What does it matter, my child, as long as you are happy," he said. "Why care what people say?"

"I can't help caring," she said impatiently. "You call me a child, but I am not a child!"

"You are to me," he said. "It is because you are a child that I love you. If you had been hard and keen and worldly-wise, I could not have taken you to my heart."

"But you do love me?" she said.

"Do you doubt it, my child—my child wife?" he said.

"No," she replied, "for if you had not truly loved me, you would not have proclaimed me your wife at San Remo. When you go back to your studio I shall go with you, shall I not? I shall always live with you now. You will not forsake me, will you?"

"No," he said, "I will never forsake you. I could not if I would. You are my wife."

Her eyes shone with delight.

"The signora who lived at the Villa Buonsoggiorno has gone back to America, has she not?" she asked suddenly.

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He winced inwardly, but hoped
betrayed it to Maddalena's watchfu
made a sign of assent.

"Will she know?" Maddalena
eagerness. "Will you write and
you have married me again?"

"I shall not write," he said; "
know."

Maddalena drew a deep breath o
There was a gleam of triumph in h
"Will you paint as much as ever?
presently. "Shall I sit for you stil

"More than ever," he replied. "
very hard and I shall want your hel
You are such a splendid model."

She smiled with gratified vanity
that picture you painted while you
she asked. "The one in Paris,
think so clever. Pietro was telli
it."

"Oh, that," he said. "It is ca
ciation.'"

"But I don't know what that
said. "Tell me about it. Did
model?"

"No," he said, and a shadow fell

"Then there is no woman in it?"

He did not reply.

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"What is renunciation?" she asked.

"Oh," he said, with a faint sigh, "Renunciation means—a death in life. It means the smothering of the heart's desire—the taking of a cross. But you do not understand that, do you, Maddalena *mia?*"

"Of course I cannot understand all those words," she said impatiently; "but I should know if you would tell me what the picture is like."

Then to satisfy her he drew from his pocket a small photograph of the painting which hung in the Salon at Paris and had received high praise from critics qualified to judge its merits. Unrolling it he held it before her while the horses slowly climbed the hill. Maddalena saw the interior of a church. It might have been San Lorenzo in Lucina, for a picture of the Christ on the Cross hung above the altar. Before it stood a young nun. Dark rippling hair escaped from beneath the white linen on her brow, her large beautiful grey eyes expressed a deep unutterable sadness, her cheeks were sunken and deathly pale; her lips compressed in pain. With one hand she clasped to her breast a crucifix, the other extended held a letter and a dead rose which she was thrusting into the flame of the lamp which swung before the altar.

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Maddalena looked and
flushed with sudden ar
recognized the small, de
earnest, sad eyes of the r

"What a dismal pi
"I hate gloomy churche
is melancholy. I am
Paris, for I do not war
people find to admire in

"What indeed!" sai
smile. "It has no bea
love to cherish sad thoug
is dearer than joy. H
creature of the sunshine

As he spoke the dri
They had come as far as
bring them. The neares
across the hillside. Th
dismissed the carriage.

Following the narrow
they were soon standing
Gabrielle had looked
Rossa.

"Ah! there is moth
Maddalena. "She is
mother, here!"

She waved her hand
child.

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"Run on and tell her all the news before I come," said Theyn. "I will follow in a minute."

Maddalena ran off, well pleased. Theyn lighted a pipe, and stretching himself on the sunburnt grass smoked and meditated.

A peaceful home looked the red-tiled cottage at this hour. The garden, with its fruit trees covered with snowy blossoms, its vines putting forth fresh green leaves and tender curling tendrils, and flowers blooming below, was a dream of beauty. Beneath on the hillside the flourishing olive gardens faded away in hazy blue, the monotony of the landscape broken by clusters of tall cypresses or a white-faced cottage shining forth from the sombre foliage. To the right, mountains, rugged in form and darkly purple, closed the view.

Theyn could hear the voices of the women, chattering eagerly. He heard Maddalena's laugh and the dog's joyous bark. He saw his wife's form flitting through the trees with the dog at her heels, then heard her gaily singing one of the songs of the contadini.

Maddalena was happy.

He stifled within him the thought of what might have been. Maddalena was happy, and happy she should be, if it was in his power to make her so.

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As he rose to go down and join her, he was startled by the sound of a step. Turning, he saw a man coming quickly towards him through the olives.

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CHAPTER XVIII

THE LION-TAMER

THE man who advanced towards Theyn, with the evident intention of addressing him, presented a somewhat grotesque figure as he came through the olives. He could not have been less than thirty years of age, and was rather below the middle height, though sturdily built. His clear olive complexion and regular features were of the Italian type; but there was a certain cosmopolitan air about his attire. A white Tyrolese hat rested at a curious angle on the black hair, which, while closely cropped, betrayed a tendency to curl. His suit of thin serge might have been worn on an English yacht; but the turned-down collar, which revealed his full round throat, and the red cord and tassels so carelessly knotted beneath, were suggestive of the rural districts of Italy.

These details Theyn noted later. What first

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struck him as he looked at the man was the remarkable alertness and vividness of his gaze and the jaunty air with which he bore himself, as though accustomed to court and to attract attention. The glance that swept Theyn seemed to comprehend him in an instant; then lifting his hat the stranger said courteously in Italian:

"Excuse me, signor, is it not the Casa Rossa that I see below?"

"You are right," said Theyn, looking curiously at him; "the Casa Rossa is the name by which my little house is known."

"Your house?" said the stranger, baring his head again with a flourish. "You then are the '*Padrone di casa*.' But shall we talk in English, for though you speak my language so well, I am sure that you are an Englishman."

The last words were spoken in English, which, if less pure in accent than Theyn's Italian, was equally fluent.

"Certainly, if you prefer it," Theyn replied carelessly, in the same language.

"I do prefer it," said the other; "I always like when I can to speak so as not to be understood by the people around me. You smile—you think we are pretty clear of natives on this hillside; but 'hedges have ears,' as they say in England, so why not olive groves? Not that I have any-

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thing secret to confide to the signor; but it is my habit."

"You have acquired caution in your travels, my friend," said Theyn; "for I take it you are a traveller. At any rate you must have learned your English in England."

"I did," said the other, with the eagerness of the man who enjoys nothing more than talking about himself. "I have spent years in England, and have travelled the length and breadth of the country. I went there to make my fortune, and I have not done badly, though I did not keep to the lines I at first meant to follow. I wonder now if you can guess who I am."

Theyn shook his head. There was something so curious in the man's bearing and the vividness of his glance that he found himself wondering if he were absolutely sane.

"I have not the least idea," he said.

"You have heard of Leonardo Zamboti, the Lion-tamer?"

Theyn searched his memory for a moment; but was compelled reluctantly to reply in the negative.

"Ah!"—the man's countenance fell momentarily—"you have not; but you *will* hear of him when you return to England, for I have travelled with my lions from one end of the country to

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the other, and had crowds of
where."

"You have great skill in
beasts?" said Theyn, wonderi
the man's errand to the "Cas

"I don't know any one w
though I say it myself," repli
modestly; "I have always bee
from the time when as a little l
I could tame the savagest do
into perilously close quarters wit
thought to turn that talent to
went to England. I meant to
but found there were too many
and Italian is not a language i
English hotels. I fell so low i
was glad to go round with a h
monkey. 'Twas a poor bu
to hire them both, yet I sav
over it to buy a young b
End! To be sure I got him
was sick, and the dealer was
him. Poor Bruin and I had s
tures together; but I cured hi
to walk on his hind legs, dan
gun, and the like. A good
Bruin in the quiet streets of I
you. At last I chanced to fall i

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showman, who took a fancy both to me and to my bear. He invited me to join him, and I did. I taught him some tricks with the animals and learned some things from him in return. We ran the menagerie together for a couple of years. It was not all honey, I can tell you. I did the hardest part of the work and got the least pay. Then one day I had an accident. I was trying an experiment with a lion and it failed, and the brute mauled me pretty badly. It was a narrow squeak for me, and I was in a hospital for ten weeks."

"I should think that cured you of any desire to experiment with lions," said Theyn as the man, having spoken with the utmost rapidity, paused for sheer lack of breath.

"Not a bit of it," he returned; "the nurse in the hospital said to me: 'You'll give up that dangerous way of earning your living now, and try something easier, won't you?' But giving up has never been my way. As soon as my shoulder was healed, I looked out for another engagement. My money was almost gone, though, before I got one; but it was a better one when it came. I got a good post in a travelling menagerie. The proprietor was getting old, and by and by, when I had saved a bit of money, he was glad to let me have the whole concern at a reasonable

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price. For the last four years, sir, I have run the prettiest little menagerie you could wish to see, and taken it up and down your country from Land's End to John o'Groats. Oh, don't I know England well, that's all!"

"No wonder you speak the language so well," said Theyn, smiling. "But now you are in Italy once more, what has become of your menagerie? You could not bring it with you."

"Could I not?" said Leonardo proudly. "I have brought my lions any way. I mean to astonish Italy with them as I have astonished England. I landed them at Genoa yesterday, glad enough, poor beasts, that the voyage was over. The rest of my stock I sold, for I don't mean to go back to England. With my performing lions I can make a good living now in Italy, so I've come to seek my wife."

"To seek your wife?" repeated Theyn, vaguely.

"Yes, my wife," said the other eagerly; "she is here with her mother in your Casa Rossa, I understand. You know her as Maddalena Bracci."

Theyn started, and the colour left his face. He stared at the stranger for a moment ere he spoke.

"You do not know what you are saying," he said; "Maddalena cannot be your wife."

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"Cannot be my wife!" repeated the lion-tamer, with one of his most terrific glances; "but I tell you she is. What do you mean by your *cannot?*"

"I mean that she cannot be your wife for the simple reason that she is *mine*," said Theyn quietly; "we were married before the Sindaco at San Remo, only this morning as it happens."

"*Dio Mio!*" cried the stranger excitedly; "then I have only just come in time. So Maddalena has been false after all! But I might have known. And you can stand there and tell me in your calm, English way that you have married my wife! But I fancy the law will allow that I have a prior claim. You were married before the Sindaco, were you? So was I—before the Sindaco of Viareggio, who wore his tricoloured badge of office as he pronounced us man and wife."

Theyn grew whiter as he listened. He stretched out his hand and grasped a branch of the nearest tree, as if to satisfy himself by touching something tangible that he was not in the world of dreams.

"Is this the truth you are telling?" he asked sternly.

"*Madonna Mia!* Why should I lie?" asked Leonardo; "you can look in the register at Viareggio and you will find our names there, duly

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signed and witnessed—Guiseppe N
dalena Bracci. Guiseppe Nardi is
you understand; the other is l
guerre. I meant to make Maddalen
was not an ignorant fellow whom
priest could satisfy. I must know
the land recognized our marriage.
to come back and find Maddale
another, and yet how nearly it ha
But you must see, signor, that
void. And why should a gentl
want such a woman as Maddalena.
You should marry one of your o

"If what you say is true," said
"I have unwittingly done you
When did this marriage take pla

"Ten years last Easter," w
"Maddalena was but fifteen; bu
and knew what I was about. I l
dalena ever since she was a little
meant that she should be my wif

"Yet you left her for ten ye
she, I suppose, thought that you

"Not she—Maddalena knew be
said Leonardo with an expressiv
told her that when I had made e
would return. I thought she w
true, for she swore to me by all

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you—you tempted her with your money, I suppose. Did she tell you that she had had a husband who was dead ? "

" She never named you to me," said Theyn.

" Ah ! I thought not," said the other, throwing up his hands.

" Did her mother know of the marriage ? " asked Theyn.

" No ; we were married on the sly, as you say," replied Leonardo. " Monna Teresina thought me not good enough for her pretty daughter, so to make sure of Maddalena, I married her without her mother's knowledge, and we parted at the door of the Municipio."

" Have you never written to her during all those years ? " asked Theyn.

The man shrugged his shoulders. " Yes, I have written, but writing letters is not much in my line, and it was still less in Maddalena's, whose penmanship went little beyond signing her name. When my last letter came back through the post office, I guessed that Monna Teresina had left Viareggio and returned to her native place on the Riviera. That was why I determined to go to Bordighera as soon as possible after my arrival in Italy. By good luck I encountered an old neighbour in the train who told me I should find Monna Teresina and her daughter living in a

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not blame you. How were you to know that Maddalena had a husband if she chose to conceal the fact? She has deceived us both. I was the fool to trust a woman. They are deeper and more treacherous than any tiger; yet by their beauty and grace and cunning artifice, they hold us men within their velvet paws, willing victims. But I can tame lions and tigers, and I shall know how to deal with Maddalena. I go to hear what she has to say for herself. *Addio!*"

"I will see you again," said Theyn, and the next moment stood alone amid the olives.

"Is it possible?" he said aloud, looking about him with an air of amazement. The same fair landscape lay before him, bathed in the clear, peaceful light of the afternoon. The blossom-laden fruit trees, the tender green of the vines, the soft blue of the olive-clad hills, the red-tiled cottage, all was as before, yet by the unlooked-for appearance of this stranger the situation for him was wholly changed. The uninviting path of duty he had pledged himself to follow faithfully was no longer his to pursue. He was not Maddalena's husband. He was her victim. She had never been the simple child of Nature he had imagined her. A hard, bitter laugh broke from him as he realized how she had fooled him. So

is was the woman whom Gabrielle had grieved

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to wound, whom she had refused to wrong, for whom she had pleaded that justice should be done her!

As the sound of excited voices ascended from the garden below the hill, Theyn turned and hurried through the olives to the road. He had for the moment but one desire—to get as far from the Casa Rossa as possible. He hurried on till he came to where three ways met. There he halted for a moment's consideration. To descend into San Remo was impossible. He could not meet the eyes that but a couple of hours before had watched him driving away as Maddalena's bridegroom. His heart sickened with disgust as he recalled her triumphant satisfaction with her new *rôle*. Then he drew a long, long breath of relief. It only remained to ascertain if the man's words were true. He would strike across the country to Taggia and there take the train for Viareggio.

Theyn strode on, finding relief in rapid motion. He encountered scarcely any one on the quiet country road. As he neared Taggia, the skeleton town of Bussana came into sight on its green hillside. Memory stabbed him with a recollection of the morning when he had wandered with Gabrielle through its deserted streets. How happy they had been till Maddalena appeared and made

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that savage attempt to injure Gabrielle. That woman had been his curse. Yet might she not say that he had been her curse? Might she not at this hour be wishing that she had never seen him? It was one of the miserable ironies of his lot that her love should have been given to him unsought. Truly his life was as complete a ruin as that town of Bussana, which, fair to the eye from a distance, comprised only grass-grown streets and roofless houses. Was there a man on this earth more desolate than he?

The sun had set amid clouds ere Theyn came down into the main road to the station. The expanse of sea stretching beyond the low stone wall looked grey and desolate. "Alone on a wide, wide sea," he murmured to himself as he thought of the future.

There would be no train to Genoa for at least an hour. He leaned upon the wall and fell into a deep and painful reverie in which he seemed to be looking at the ghost of himself—the ghost of what he might have been had he been a braver, stronger, truer man. He had often recognized that his life was a failure; but hitherto he had laid on another the blame. His father's sin, he had thought, had wrecked his life. Now he began to suspect that his own sin had played its part. He had indulged in a craven self-pity

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when he had better have desp
had imagined himself the sport
as he leaned across the wall an
breeze from the sea cool his br
a whisper of the Unseen Prese
our life as the ocean embrace
there invisible Hands controllin
they have moulded it to a nob
resistance of his wayward hum
by these Hands that he and G
held apart?

Surely it was well for her. F
of her; yet she had loved hi
should be his inspiration. He
hope of ever seeing her again
had loved him he would set hi
best he could of what remain
He would like to paint such pict
should hear of him and feel th
to be called her friend.

Theyn roused himself and wal
tion. It was past midnight when
reggio. The next morning he pr
the Municipio almost as soon
Within the last half hour he had
nervous dread lest he should n
tures he sought. But the offi
confided his business, soon

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Guiseppe Nardi ; Maddalena Bracci. There was no doubt that the two had been legally united. Theyn procured a copy of the entry, for which he paid handsomely, and his business was done.

About midday a train passed through Viareggio by which he might travel to San Remo. He felt a strong reluctance to return thither ; but it was imperative. Certain legal steps were necessary, certain arrangements must be made ere he could say farewell to a place of which he now desired to be quit for ever.

At the station Theyn purchased a local journal. When he unfolded it in the train he discovered to his dismay that it contained an account of his marriage with the contadina, Maddalena Bracci, on the previous day. With irritation he read the high-flown description of himself and his humble bride, wondering who had furnished the writer with the details he had so richly embroidered. But why should he care ? It would be a nine days' wonder and then forgotten. He should leave San Remo as soon as possible. He would remove with his man and Pat—ugly, faithful Pat must not be left behind—to Rome and set up his studio there. Monna Teresina should have the "Casa Rossa." Then it would still be a shelter for Maddalena, if she wearied of sharing her husband's adventurous life. Or would it be

Google

better to make it over to the li
Well, he could discuss that
lawyer.

As Theyn ascended the step
at San Remo, he encountere
he would have wished to meet
etti threw up her hands with a
ishment as she saw him.

"What!" she exclaimed, "
Your beautiful bride deserted
honey so soon palled?"

Theyn shook his head with
gaiety he was far from feeling.

"Ask me no questions, sign
in the mood to be catechised
no love for San Remo, but i
that brings me here now."

"Business!" she repeated
the business was completed
can be no question as to th
marriage. Have you seen t
I have just posted a copy to

Theyn winced. But wha
Gabrielle would know that
their weight, that her influen
with him. The fact that
proved null could make little
things were.

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He hurried away, leaving the signora thrilled by the excitement of a fresh and vivid curiosity. He would get through the unpleasant business at the Municipio as quickly as possible, and then seek Signora Bertolini. If she had read her *Settimana* she would be amazed at its revelation concerning him. She would reproach him for leaving her in ignorance of his intentions. An explanation was due to this old true friend. It would be a relief to talk things over with her, yet how impossible for her to understand all!

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CHAPTER

AN ASTOUNDING R

It was spring in the Eternal (
with that plenitude of beauty
makes a spring day in Italy
Paradise.

Easter was but just ov
forestieri still crowded the
galleries, while the hotels wei
On an afternoon at the be
galleries of the "Accademia
inconveniently full, though t
tain, being the work of mode
rule greatly appeal to foreign
with keen black eyes and al
was deriving much amusem
the people around her as she
chief gallery and talked in
American girl. Their conve
peculiar mixture of Italian
while each understood the la

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to the tongue of neither did the foreign words come easily.

Five years before, the little woman, whose eyes now shone with such a mischievous gleam, was a disconsolate widow who had felt it impossible to remain in the charming villa at San Remo, which she and her husband had long made their home. Signora Bertolini had never attempted to winter at San Remo after Basil Theyn gave up his studio there. With the desire to be near this friend she had made Rome her winter resort, and during the last four winters had occupied a delightful suite of rooms in an old palace, the upper windows of which overlooked the Forum. Rome had soothed her as it soothes many a sad heart. Naturally of an ardent, sympathetic nature, life quickly took on fresh colour and interest for her after she settled there. She did not forget the husband she had loved with passionate intensity; but she no longer mourned for him with the grief that refuses to be comforted. It was possible once more for Signora Bertolini to take a lively interest in her neighbours and to amuse herself with their absurdities as well as sympathize with their joys and sorrows.

"I don't care much about the pictures," said the American girl frankly. "One doesn't care for modern art after studying the old masters.

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Besides, some of the work here is
I've seen one or two drawings of t
that would have sent Michael Ange
could have seen them. Why
them ? "

Signora Bertolini shrugged
" Bribery of some kind or other,
replied. " But there are some th
looking at. You have not see
picture."

" Your friend ? " repeated the
mean Mr. Basil Theyn ? Has
here ? "

" Certainly he has, and to my
gem of the collection," said the
" How is it that you have missed
St. Francis ? ' It is in the little

" Well, if I must own up, the
went into that gallery ; but was
peep from the entrance," said t
laugh. " But now I want to s
for I dote on St. Francis and a
him. Will you come with me ? '

The signora rose with alacrity.
look on the work of her friend. I
her fault if it were not appreciated

There was a little crowd before
they approached it. Others b

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she craned forward for a better view. "It is beautiful indeed. You are right; it is the best modern picture I have seen since I came away. Why surely—well, I never!"

"What is it?" asked the signora as she saw her companion's gaze grow intent and eager, no longer fixed upon the picture, but on some one standing before it.

"Oh!" murmured the younger lady, "who would have thought of seeing Mrs. Abel Grant of Boston here?"

"Mrs. Abel Grant!" repeated the signora reflectively; then in an eager whisper she added: "Oh, where is she? Show her to me."

"Do you see that dainty little woman dressed in black silk with just a suspicion of white in her toque? There, she is working her way nearer to the picture. She is interested in it. Perhaps she will buy it. It would be a mere trifle to the widow of a millionaire."

"The *widow* of a millionaire, did you say?" inquired Signora Bertolini with curious eagerness.

"Yes, his widow—Abel Grant was gathered to his fathers about eighteen months ago."

"*Dio Mio!*" murmured the Italian, "and I never heard of it!"

The American girl looked at her curiously.

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buy this whole show and never know th
done it."

"Where is she?" asked the sig
peering into the crowd; "I can't se
who looks at all like a millionaire."

"Of course not, because she do
plied the American, rather unintelligibly
now, you can see that neat little figur
My! how gone on that picture she is!

"Do you mean that little lady in
holding a white vellum note-book?"
signora in astonishment. "Why, sh
rived at the 'Dalmatia' last eveni
visiting friends there and saw her a
brought a maid with her, whose appe
sented a ludicrous contrast to that o
tress. I remember hearing that her
Grant; but I never thought it cou
Mrs. Grant. How strange that, bei
she has not gone to one of the large h

"Not if she wishes to be quiet and c
and to remain *incognita*," said the ot
has shown her good sense in going t
matia,' though it may have been
choice.' I hear it is a very comfortab

"Mr. Theyn has always spoken hi
said the signora, "and when an
praises an hotel it is bound to be

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I am surprised to hear that that is Mrs. Abel Grant. I thought she was very pretty."

"Who told you so? A man, I'll bet. No woman would call her pretty; but I'll own she has charm. She is just as choice and dainty and exquisitely finished as a bit of Sèvres china. Then think what that tiny hand holds! Oh, the men will find her fascinating now, you may be sure. I should like to know how many offers of marriage she has in a week."

Signora Bertolini thought of Theyn as she stole another glance at the face of the young widow. Ah! it was a sweet face. Yet it did not lack character. It was the face of a strong, true, loving woman. There was a soft flush now on the delicate cheek, the lips were tremulous, the eyes had the peculiar lustre that tells that tears are not far off. Was she thinking of the painter? Did Theyn know that Abel Grant was dead? Was it this that had made him so restless and irritable and difficult to understand during the past year? But surely he had not dreamed of her coming to Rome at this time, or he would not have gone off to Subiaco to make studies for a picture.

As the two women observed the young widow a vague consciousness of their scrutiny disturbed her. She looked round, and her clear grey eyes

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met the signora's for a momen
moved away.

"Yes, she has charm," Sig
to herself. "I can see that
her fascinating. Now I wo
the story of Maddalena! I
a talk with her. Dare I
Why not? If she is a milli
a woman, and it may be that
she would give her fortune to

Then the signora rememb
promised to dine at the "Da
ing. If only Fate would be
an opportunity of speaking t
would be ready to avail hersel
that offered.

The heart of Gabrielle Gra
intense emotion as she turne
plation of Theyn's picture.
almost like meeting him, and
weeks at San Remo, which b
dim and remote, feel like ye
they had talked of St. Franc
walked along the pleasant
looks down over gardens an
sea, and she had suggested th
subject for a picture. Her h
joy and pride as she saw how

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out her suggestion. So his life was no failure. He had risen above his personal sorrows and achieved work that was instinct with true genius. That it was well with him in the highest sense, she could not doubt. No one who lacked spiritual insight; no one in whom the spirit was dominated by the flesh could have painted that face of St. Francis.

Gabrielle had gone back to America with the feeling that she would never see Italy again. To return under any circumstances would be too painful, she thought, and she dared not run the risk of meeting Theyn. But in the re-action from the long strain of her devotion to her husband, when her physician pronounced a trip to Europe the best possible remedy for the nervous depression from which she suffered, the idea presented itself with a fascination she found it hard to resist. For a while she struggled against it; then decided that to Europe she would go, but would keep far from the Riviera. She would not risk the least chance of an encounter with Theyn. So in the autumn, accompanied by her faithful Marcella, she had crossed the Atlantic to Liverpool. She had spent several weeks in London, making the acquaintance of some of her father's relatives. Later the fogs drove her to Folkstone. Thence she had crossed the channel, spent some

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was Tivoli—or if that were too near Rome—there were other places amid the Apennines. Was it not Subiaco of which two American ladies she had met in Paris had spoken with such enthusiasm and besought her to visit? She had thought, when they spoke, that there would be no time for visiting Subiaco, but now the remote, mediaeval town seemed just the place in which she would like to hide herself. She would, on her return to the hotel, inform Marcella, who was busy with sundry arrangements for her mistress's comfort, that their stay in the Eternal City could be but brief after all.

Fortune favoured Signora Bertolini that evening at the "Dalmatia." The places occupied at the *table d'hôte* by the lady and gentleman whose guest she was were opposite those assigned to the latest arrivals,and the signora found herself in close proximity to Mrs. Abel Grant.

The conversation in their immediate circle was lively and general. Gabrielle was gradually drawn into it. Some one spoke of wintering in Egypt and compared the climate of that country with that of the Riviera. Then in reply to a query some one said: "Ask Signora Bertolini. She can tell you all about the Riviera; she knows it so well."

The signora was aware that Gabrielle had

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to draw Gabrielle to the signora's side as there was a general move from the dining-room.

"Excuse me, signora," she said in Italian as they passed along the corridor; "May I ask if your villa at San Remo was known as the Villa Buonsoggiorno?"

"The same," said the signora smiling. "I see you know it. Can it be that you are the Mrs. Grant who once rented it of me for three months?"

As Gabrielle assented a deep crimson flush dyed her face and neck. The signora looked at her with sympathy in her dark eyes. She forgot all about Gabrielle's great wealth as she slipped her hand within her arm and said caressingly:

"Then you cannot seem a stranger to me, *cara mia*. To think that you know every corner of my dear little home where I was once so happy!" Besides, I have heard Mr. Theyn speak of you. You will want to hear all I can tell you about San Remo. Let us find a cosy nook in the drawing-room and have a chat. I will ask my friends to excuse me for a few minutes."

"Thank you," was all Gabrielle could find to say.

As they settled themselves apart from the others, Signora Bertolini with consummate tact began to talk of Theyn in such a way that it ap-

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husband appeared upon the scene. The woman had deceived Theyn. She was already married; had been legally united as a young girl to a native of Viareggio—a bold, determined character, who, having secretly married her, went off to make his fortune in England. He had many ups and downs, but succeeded at last and returned, after ten years' absence, a renowned lion-tamer! It was a curious story; but I was very grateful to the man for turning up at the right moment, for I could not bear that my friend's life should be spoiled by such an unsuitable marriage. You do not need me to tell you that a contadina could be no mate for a man like Basil Theyn."

Gabrielle made no response whatever. So overwhelmed was she by the revelation thus made to her that she could not utter a word. The thoughts that presented themselves in quick, tumultuous fashion were not such as could be expressed.

Seeing how it was with her, the signora went on talking. She gave an amusing description of how in the past summer she had seen Leonardo Zamboti's travelling show set up outside one of the gates of Rome, and Maddalena, seated within the ticket-box, a picture of contented motherhood, with a fine boy in her arms, whom the lion-tamer seemed to consider the most remarkable "cub"

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in his menagerie. She laughed, and made Gabrielle laugh; then adroitly turned the conversation by inquiring how long Mrs. Grant meant to remain in Rome.

"Not very long," replied Gabrielle. "I am anxious for quiet, and I want to see something of rural Italy. I have been strongly advised to visit Subiaco, and it is not unlikely I may go there next week."

A vivid light came into the signora's eyes. She made a motion as though to speak, then checked herself and merely remarked after a moment that she had never visited Subiaco, but had always heard that it was a most romantic and charming place.

But when Gabrielle had slipped away the signora laughed softly to herself ere she rejoined her friends.

"How thankful I am that I held my tongue!" she thought; "I might have spoiled all. Providence is working to bring about their happiness; for she cannot stay at Subiaco without meeting Basil Theyn."

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CHAPTER XX

THE SPRING'S BENEDICTION

"Oh! this is the most lovely place I have ever seen!" exclaimed Gabrielle, and sighed.

"Why do you sigh as you say it?" asked Marcella. "I feel more like singing. I can cry, with Pippa:

> 'God's in His Heaven,
> All's right with the world.'

on such a day as this. 'Tis a pretty rough path, though, we're following."

They were threading their way through bushes and boulders on the left bank of the Anio, above Subiaco, under the guidance of a small sturdy native, who carried their luncheon basket. The river, freed from the rocky walls which confine it higher up, here flowed between banks luxuriantly verdant. The blossoms of wild laburnums, laurestinas, and cherry trees overhung the

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stream, mingled with the tend
hornbeams, while a profusion
grew in the lush grass below
anemones, cyclamen, cowslips,
and purple, more flowers tha
met Marcella's delighted eyes
the difficult exertion of stoopi
It was little wonder that sh
ascended the steep path, for
warm and no breeze from the
to visit that nook by the riv

"I did not know that I sigh

"Yes, this path is rough;
reach the 'Nymphæum,' and
as long as you like, Marcella
Subiaco looks from here!"

She had sprung upon a boul
back at the old town, whic
picturesquely from the wood
below it. The houses rise one
the slope of the crag, and the
castle crowns the summit. Fr
Gabrielle could see a bit of the
below the town, with a black-
along it.

Marcella assented as she tu
the landscape; then they can
upon her mistress. Marcella'

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lost none of its weight and rotundity in the years that had passed since they quitted San Remo, yet she had worked hard for Gabrielle in various ways, and was if possible more devoted to her than ever. Her eyes dwelt lovingly on the slim little form in short walking skirt and cool white blouse. Gabrielle's hat of rough white straw, with a broad black ribbon, was simplicity itself, yet marvellously becoming. Her expression was pensive. She did not look a woman who could command what mortals most covet, but one who was wistful and hungry for that which most women crave—love and home.

The next moment Marcella uttered a startled cry, for a dog came rushing through the bushes and sprang upon her with a hearty bark. That the dog had the friendliest intentions was evident to Gabrielle at the first glance; but Marcella, nervous of strange dogs, recoiled from it in terror.

"Don't be afraid, Marcella; this dog will not hurt you," said Gabrielle. "See how friendly he is!" And she bent to stroke the animal, which rapturously licked her hands and attempted to caress her cheek in the same fashion.

"Why, surely, surely we have seen this dog before. See, he knows us! Do you not remember him, Marcella?"

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"I have not seen him before," declared Marcella, "nor have I ever met his equal for ugliness."

Gabrielle laughed, but a curious trembling had seized her. She tried to get a look at the dog's collar; but as she laid her hand on it, he broke away and was out of sight in a moment.

Then the small boy with the luncheon basket made a remark. "The dog," he said, "belongs to an English gentleman who is staying at the hotel."

There is but one hotel at Subiaco, and that affords only the simplest accommodation. Boarders are, however, received at the suppressed convent known as the "Casa Missione." Here it was that Gabrielle and her maid had found rooms when they arrived on the previous evening. They had had the kindest reception from the reverend mother and her subordinates. The good sisters could hardly have taken more pains to make Gabrielle comfortable had they been aware how very wealthy she was. Gabrielle was in the mood to be pleased with the rude simplicity of her quarters in the convent, and she was already planning to give the nuns a helping hand with the works of charity to which they devoted their lives.

Gabrielle began to question the little lad, and elicited from him the fact that many artists came

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Nature," said Gabrielle. "It was in this stream, or rather in the lakes that he formed from it, that he fished for trout with a golden net."

"And here, was it not?" said Marcella, "that his supper table was struck by lightning and his drinking cup shivered as he was raising it to his mouth. That's a sure omen of death. I knew a young man in Rhode Island whose glass broke in his hand as he was about to drink, and he was dead in twenty-four hours."

"Really, Marcella, you will make me afraid to drink if you tell me such tales," said Gabrielle, smiling; "but it was a mercy for the world that Nero's life ended when it did. His utter overthrow, miserable flight, and cowardly death were certainly a just retribution."

"Ay," said Marcella, "'Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord,' and He always pays in the end. You can't separate sin and suffer ing."

"No," said Gabrielle, and her face grew gr as she stood looking down the stream to Subiaco, seen through the rifts of the mountains, proudly reared its grand ol once the summer home of the popes; do not want to separate them. I find that God is Absolute Justice as r thought that He is Perfect Love.

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cella, I want to explore rather farther before we have luncheon. I will leave you here with the basket and the guide-book. You will not be afraid? You can keep the boy for company, if you like."

"Much company he would be when he cannot understand a word that I say," returned Marcella. "No, I'd rather you'd tell him he may go, for a boy that you cannot keep in order is a rare plague."

Gabrielle laughed and dismissed the boy. Then, telling Marcella she would not be very long, she continued to ascend the bank of the river, finding new beauty at every turn.

With what a lavish hand spring had flung her largess everywhere! Gabrielle was obliged to gather some of the flowers that grew so plenteously at her feet, and their perfection of beauty filled her heart with a wild rapture. Oh! the world was so beautiful, the spring so delicious; how happy she would have been on such a day as this if only—— Ah! the pity of it! The very sweetness of her surroundings made her heart sick with longing for that which she lacked. To be alone amidst it all, to yearn for another who should see it as she saw it, for a heart that would answer to her heart, and to know there was one who would feel just as she did, who could read

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her thoughts before she uttered them, and ı needed her—yes, she verily believed it—as needed him, and yet they were apart, and perh would be apart for evermore!

It appeared to Gabrielle that she had thou of no one save Basil Theyn since her talk v Signora Bertolini two evenings before. W her husband lived, and needed her constant (and devotion, it had been comparatively eas hold the thought of Theyn at bay. And as l as she believed him to be the husband of Mac lena, she had still striven to banish him from mind. But now that there was no sin in thinl of him, no sin even in loving him, her thou dwelt on him at every moment when she was absolutely obliged to think of something (She tried to recall his face as she had last seer but memory was strangely elusive, and the tures she loved would not reveal themse distinctly to mental vision. She wonderec the impulse which had made her hasten f Rome, in dread of meeting him, when there no longer any reason why they should not n and she desired above all things to see him a Her passionate longing to look upon his fac hear his voice, to feel his arms enfold her, hold her his against all the world, was beco a positive pain.

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trembling seized Gabrielle. For a moment her sight grew dim. The dog bounded forward along a track amid the trees. He looked back, barking vigorously, and trying to incite Gabrielle to follow him. She hesitated, and he came back to her side. Barking, whining, licking her hands—by every mode of speech possible to a dog—he urged Gabrielle to follow him. At last she turned and slowly followed him along the narrow, almost impenetrable track.

It was but for a few yards that Gabrielle followed the dog ere the path ended on a soft green slope, looking down upon the river. Here the view was so exquisite that it was not surprising that an artist should have set up his easel on this spot. But Gabrielle saw neither the view nor the artist's easel as she stepped from the shade of the hornbeams and wild cherries, through which she had made her way. She saw only *him*. Theyn had left his work and stood in the centre of the sward, gazing towards the trees with a look of solemn expectation on his face. A low eager cry escaped him as Gabrielle came in sight, yet he appeared more delighted than astonished as he went forward with outstretched hands.

Gabrielle let her flowers drop as she placed her hands in his. Then for a long moment they

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looked into each other's eyes, and neither could find a word to say.

"Gabrielle, my love," Theyn said in low tones, tremulous with feeling, "is it you indeed? Have you come to me at last?"

"Yes, I have come," Gabrielle answered very low; "but I did not know I was coming to you. I rather fancied, when I left Rome yesterday, that I was leaving you behind."

"Ah, you have been in Rome! You have been so near to me and I did not know it!" Theyn hardly seemed to know what words escaped him in his rapture of joy at seeing her again. "But why then did you come if not to find me?"

Gabrielle's face was glowing. Theyn was unaware with how tight a clasp he held her. It was as if he would never let her go again.

"Because, because," she whispered, "I was afraid—I thought—I did not know till Signora Bertolini told me——"

Gabrielle paused. Explanation was too difficult. She expected him to understand the rest without words.

"Ah! you saw Signora Bertolini! And she told you I was here?"

"No, oh no." Gabrielle's confusion deepened. "She told me nothing of the kind. Did I not

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her closer, "how I wish that I were worthy of such love! I am not worthy to touch your shoe-strings; but I love you better than my life."

"Don't call yourself unworthy, Basil. It is not true. You do not know the kind of girl I was before you knew me. Dear, I hope I am a little better and wiser than I was before we met at San Remo. I have been learning many things since—amongst others to know myself."

"Perhaps I have learned the same lesson," he responded with no feigned humility. "Dearest, I do hope that I am a rather better fellow than I was in those old days. At least I have learned to see God in my life and to thank Him for all His dealings with me. And, most of all, I thank Him that He made you so strong and pure that you could withstand me when I tempted you. And now, Gabrielle, will you be my wife? I am not worthy; but will you take me and make of me what you can?"

"Basil, you know that I am yours," was her reply, and he drew her into his arms, and they kissed with solemn gladness.

It was some time later that she said to him "It almost seems, Basil, as if you expected me to come to you. What would you have done if

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I had remained in America? Would you have come there to seek me?"

"I do not know," he replied, "for, indeed, I did expect you to come. Something told me that as we parted so we should meet again, in Italy. For months my heart has been wearying for the sight of you, and though I came to Subiaco to paint, I have accomplished hardly anything. This morning I have not done a stroke of work. I was waiting, waiting, with heart-sick longing, till you came."

"How strange!" she said. "But if I had not come, Basil, what would you have done? You would have come to America some time, would you not?"

"I cannot tell," he answered, "for whenever I thought of going to America I had a vision of a rich woman, courted, flattered, exalted, who was not my Gabrielle, and I knew how people would regard me if I sought to win her. But, believe me, Gabrielle, I never gave a thought to your wealth just now when I asked you to be my wife."

"Basil," she said gravely, "if you talk to me about money to-day, I cannot forgive you. I only know that this morning I woke poor, lonely, and sad, and now—I cannot count my sum of wealth."

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"God bless you, darling," he said; "
say nothing about your fortune, except
though it is difficult to imagine myself h
than I am at the present moment, I believ
my content might be increased if I hear
you had lost it all."

Gabrielle laughed.

"Oh, well, you cannot have everything
own way," she said. "For me, I am gla
proud that I am going to marry a great p
Of course, I always knew you were that; bu
the world knows it too and I shall have a
of wearing laurels when I bear your name.

"I shall begin a fresh picture to-mo
said Theyn; "it will be a painting of yo
saw you coming to me from beneath the
cherry blossoms, and I shall call it
Spring's Benediction.'"

So they chatted like happy children in th
day of their love, unheeding how the time
by, while Marcella, waiting beside the lu
she had carefully set out, began to fear tha
accident had befallen her loved mistress
last she started to seek her, and saw them c
hand in hand, along the woodland path
faces radiant with joy, and looking young
morning. A chill fell on Marcella's spirit
realized what it meant. They had not see

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and she turned back alone. Ere they came up with her, Marcella had braced her heart with the thought that Gabrielle would need her faithful friendship as much in the happiness of her future as in the sorrow of her past. If only Gabrielle were happy, she would be well content. So, summoning all her charity to her aid, Marcella was able to smile upon Basil Theyn and renew her acquaintance with him in amicable fashion.

"Basil," said Gabrielle, as she sat regaling Pat with dainty morsels of sandwich, "do you know that it was this ugly precious Pat of yours which led me to you? He knew us at once, and I recognized him; but Marcella, I regret to say, refused to acknowledge any connexion with an animal so devoid of beauty. Pat was most persistent; he would not rest till I followed him to where you were."

"Grand old Pat!" said Theyn, leaning forward to stroke him; "it's just another proof of his perfect sagacity and flawless friendship. He understands me better than any man has ever done."

Then his eyes sought Gabrielle's, and rested on them with a long, trustful, reposeful gaze that told her all she was to him. And as she looked on his strong rugged face and saw the true resolute soul shining out of his eyes, Gabrielle felt that it

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THE SPRING'S BENEDI(

was well worth while to have suffer
suffered and endured such sickn
deferred for the sake of being cro
with the joy and pride of being this
helpmeet, in whom his heart could

THE END.

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